

IN RE: § IN THE PROBATE COURT  
§  
§ OF  
§  
TEL OFFSHORE TRUST § TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

**INDIVIDUAL TRUSTEES' ORIGINAL ANSWER TO ATTORNEY AD LITEM'S  
FIRST AMENDED PETITION AS REALIGNED PLAINTIFF  
AND AMENDED COUNTERCLAIM**

Gary C. Evans, Jeffrey S. Swanson, and Thomas H. Owen, as Individual Trustees (collectively, "Individual Trustees") of the TEL Offshore Trust (the "Trust"), file this Original Answer to the Attorney Ad Litem's ("Ad Litem's") First Amended Petition as Realigned Plaintiff filed on or about October 28, 2016 ("Petition") and Amended Counterclaim, and would respectfully show the Court the following:

**I.  
GENERAL DENIAL**

1. As provided for and allowed under the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure 92, the Individual Trustees deny generally each and every, all and singular, of the allegations in the Petition filed by the Ad Litem and demand strict proof thereof by a preponderance of the credible evidence, as required by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Texas.

**II.  
DEFENSES**

2. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, because the Ad Litem lacks capacity to bring this suit.

3. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, because the Ad Litem lacks capacity to recover on this suit.

4. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, because the Ad Litem lacks standing to bring this suit. The Ad Litem may not assert claims on behalf of Unitholders who

were served by publication and did not appear in this proceeding or for other beneficiaries of the Trust, and may not assert claims for damage to the whole Trust estate.

5. The Individual Trustees generally plead the defense of lack of standing and lack of capacity against the claims of the Ad Litem, as well as any unit holders he purports to represent.

6. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, by the statutes of limitations. The discovery rule does not apply to Ad Litem's claims.

7. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, by the doctrine of laches.

8. The Ad Litem's claims are barred by the Individual Trustees' lien priority.

9. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, by the doctrines of estoppel, including without limitation quasi-estoppel, equitable estoppel, judicial estoppel, and promissory estoppel.

10. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, by ratification.

11. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, by waiver.

12. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, by unclean hands. The Ad Litem is putting his litigation counsel's, and his expert's interests, ahead of the interests of unit holders by seeking unreasonable, unnecessary, and excessive compensation for bringing time-barred and legally unsupportable claims against the Individual Trustees.

13. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, by indemnity.

14. The Ad Litem's claims are barred, in whole or in part, by the doctrines of payment, offset, credit, and/or recoupment.

15. The Individual Trustees plead the defense of actual, apparent, and/or implied consent.

16. The Ad Litem's claims are barred because Ad Litem is attempting to recover for actions which all unit holders had full knowledge. Simply put, the Ad Litem is seeking to recover for claims which the unit holders would not be able to bring if they were making such claims individually.

17. The Ad Litem's claims are barred by acquiescence.

18. The allegations in the First Amended Counterclaim fail to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

19. The Individual Trustees plead the defense of the vice principal rule.

20. The Ad Litem's claim for an accounting fails because Ad Litem can obtain adequate relief through the use of standard discovery and because the Ad Litem's underlying grounds for obtaining an accounting fail.

21. The Individual Trustees plead that a negligence action is not permitted against the Individual Trustees pursuant to the Trust Agreement of the Trust.

22. The Individual Trustees specifically deny responsibility for punitive or exemplary damages. If this Court finds that such damages are recoverable, such exemplary damages are limited by Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code section 41.008, and in addition, the Ad Litem cannot recover any punitive damages that are constitutionally excessive. The Individual Trustees invoke all limitations, requirements, and protections provided in Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code chapter 41, including without limitation, the requirement that the Ad Litem prove by clear-and-convincing evidence the right to recover and the elements of exemplary damages. The Individual Trustees contend that the correct burden of proof under constitutional principles is "beyond a reasonable doubt," but at a minimum, the standard is clear-and-convincing evidence, as required by chapter 41.

23. Awarding punitive damages would violate the Individual Trustees' constitutional rights, including their rights to equal protection and due process under Article I, Sections 3, 13, and 19 of the Texas Constitution and the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Awarding punitive damages would also be an unconstitutional taking under Article I, Section 17 of the Texas Constitution. In addition, awarding punitive damages would violate the prohibitions against excessive fines and cruel or unusual punishment under Article I, Section 13 of the Texas Constitution and the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Among other things, awarding punitive damages would be a constitutional violation, because:

- a. Texas law regarding punitive damages is unconstitutionally vague and does not provide sufficient notice of the conduct that could be punished and the severity of the punishment;
- b. The unconstitutional vagueness of Texas law results in arbitrary and discriminatory awards;
- c. Texas law does not provide adequate substantive and procedural safeguards to prevent arbitrary, excessive, and unconstitutional awards;
- d. Texas law does not provide adequate and meaningful guidance to fact finders when they award punitive damages, leaving such awards to arbitrary determinations by the fact finders;
- e. Texas law does not require that liability for and the amount of punitive damages be proven beyond a reasonable doubt;
- f. Punitive damages are a windfall to Ad Litem, making such damages an unconstitutional taking; and
- g. Punitive damages are not available for lawful conduct inside of Texas, for conduct outside of Texas, for conduct that has already been punished, for the conduct of another party, or for harm to others besides Ad Litem.

24. The Individual Trustees plead that the Ad Litem has exceeded the scope of his authority.

25. The Individual Trustees plead that all of their actions were specifically authorized by the Trust Agreement made as of January 1, 1983, including conducting royalty sales,

obtaining loans to pay the Trust's expenses, paying the Individual Trustees' compensation, and obtaining D&O insurance. The Individual Trustees plead the provisions of the Trust Agreement, including, without limitation, the following:

- a. Pursuant to Section 2.02 of the Trust, one of the purposes of the Trust is to "pay or provide for the payment of any liabilities incurred in carrying out the purposes of the Trust, and thereafter to distribute the remaining amounts received by the Trust pro rata to the owners of the Units."
- b. Pursuant to Section 3.03, the unit holders "take and hold the Unit subject to all the terms and provisions of this Trust Agreement."
- c. Pursuant to Section 6.01, the Trustees are "authorized" to ... take such actions as in their judgment are necessary, desirable or advisable to achieve the purpose of the Trust."
- d. Pursuant to Section 6.06, the Trust Agreement provides that the Trustees "shall use all money received by the Trust for the payment of all liabilities of the Trust, including but not limited to all expenses, taxes, and liabilities incurred of all kinds, compensation to the Trustees for their services..."
- e. Pursuant to Section 6.08, in the event of borrowing money to cover Trust's costs, "the Trustees shall suspend further Trust distributions ... until the indebtedness created by such borrowing has been paid in full."
- f. Pursuant to Section 6.11, "[t]he Trustees are authorized to maintain and defend, and to settle, in the Trust's name any claim or controversy by or against the Trust without the joinder or consent of any Certificate Holder or owner of a Unit."
- g. Pursuant to Section 6.13 of the Trust Agreement, "[t]he powers granted the Trustees under this Trust Agreement may be exercised upon such terms as the Trustees deem advisable and may affect the Trust properties for any length of time regardless of the duration of the Trust."
- h. Pursuant to Section 6.14 of the Trust Agreement, "[t]he Trustees shall be under no obligation to ... dispose of any wasting assets." The Trust Agreement specifically relieved the Trustees of any duty to dispose of any Trust assets at any particular time.
- i. Pursuant to Section 7.01 of the Trust Agreement, "[t]he Trustees are empowered to act in their discretion and shall not be personally or individually liable for any act or omission except in the case of gross negligence, bad faith or fraud."
- j. Pursuant to Section 7.03 of the Trust Agreement, "[t]he Trustees shall be indemnified by, and receive reimbursement from, the Trust Estate against ... any and all liability, expense (including counsel fees and expenses incurred in preparing for and defending claims or suits), ... or loss incurred by them individually or as Trustees in the

administration of the Trust [except for] gross negligence, bad faith or fraud....” Moreover, this Section provides the Trustees “shall have a lien upon the Trust Estate to secure them for such indemnification and reimbursement and for compensation to be paid to the Trustees.”

- k. Pursuant to Sections 7.04 and 7.05 of the Trust Agreement, the Corporate Trustee and the Individual Trustees are entitled to compensation for their services, as set forth in the Trust Agreement.
- l. Section 7.06 of the Trust Agreement provides: "To perform any act required or permitted by this Trust Agreement, the Trustees may ... be required to ... consult with . . . accountants, geologists, engineers and other parties deemed by the Trustees to be qualified as experts on the matters submitted to them ... and the opinion ... of any such parties on any matter submitted to them by the Trustees shall be full and complete authorization and protection in respect to any action taken or suffered by them hereunder in good faith and in accordance with the opinion . . . .”
- m. Pursuant to Section 9.01, the Trust Agreement's termination provisions were not triggered.

The Individual Trustees would show this Court that the claims asserted by the Ad Litem are all barred by the language quoted above, with the clarification that with respect to Section 7.06 of the Trust Agreement, the Individual Trustees are not at this time asserting the defense of advice of counsel.

26. The Individual Trustees rely upon Texas Property Code, Section 112. 054, which sets forth the limited circumstances in which modification or termination of a trust should be sought. The Trustees' decision to seek judicial termination of the Trust in 2014 was an extraordinary measure.

27. The Individual Trustees plead the defense of mitigation of damages.

28. The Individual Trustees plead that they are likely to succeed on the merits of this case and has a probable right to the relief it seeks.

29. The Individual Trustees plead that they are entitled to recover attorneys' fees and reimbursement of costs as are equitable and just pursuant to Section 114.064 of the Texas Trust Code.

30. The Ad Litem is bringing a meritless claim that relates directly to the issue of who is properly entitled to reimbursement of expenses. If the Ad Litem is allowed to diminish the Trust Estate, the Individual Trustees will suffer probable injury as the harm will be imminent and the injury will be irreparable, with no adequate legal remedy available to the Individual Trustees. Furthermore, the Ad Litem's actions are impairing the Individual Trustees' lien rights without due process. Due to the competing claims to the Trust Estate's remaining claims, the Court should not consider the Ad Litem's fee and/or expense applications until the merits of this lawsuit have been decided.

31. The Ad Litem should not be allowed to waste and deplete the remaining Trust assets and violate the due process rights of the Individual Trustees and the Trust itself.

32. The Individual Trustees file this Original Answer in good faith and with just cause. The Individual Trustees respectfully reserve the right to file an Amended Answer in this case in the manner authorized by the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.

### **III. THE INDIVIDUAL TRUSTEES' COUNTERCLAIM**

33. The Individual Trustees, as Counter-Plaintiffs, assert the following Counterclaim against Ad Litem (Counter-Defendant), and in support thereof, respectfully show as follows:

34. In accordance with Section 114.064 of the Texas Trust Code and Chapter 38.007(8) of the Texas Civil Practices & Remedies Code, the Individual Trustees are entitled to recover their attorneys' fees and reimbursement of costs.

35. The Individual Trustees have retained the law firm of Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP to represent them in this proceeding and have agreed to pay Norton Rose Fulbright reasonable and necessary attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses. An award of reasonable and

necessary attorneys' fees and expenses to the Individual Trustees would be equitable and just pursuant to Section 114.064 of the Texas Trust Code.

**IV.  
PRAYER**

WHEREFORE, Defendants/Counter-Plaintiffs Gary C. Evans, Jeffrey S. Swanson, and Thomas H. Owen, Jr., as Individual Trustees of the TEL Offshore Trust, pray that Ad Litem take nothing, and that the Individual Trustees be awarded their reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses, and pre- and post-judgment interest thereon.

Respectfully submitted,

NORTON ROSE FULBRIGHT US, L.L.P.



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ATTORNEYS FOR INDIVIDUAL TRUSTEES  
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AND THOMAS H. OWEN, JR.

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that, on January 6, 2017, a true and correct copy of the foregoing has been served via Texas e-filing and email on Ad Litem, counsel for Ad Litem, counsel for RNR Production Land and Cattle, counsel for Albert and Joyce E. Speisman, and counsel for Corporate Trustee, Bank of New York Mellon Trust Company, N.A. I hereby certify that all other interested parties in this matter will be served in accordance with the Court's Order Directing Method of Service dated January 21, 2016.



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Paul Trahan