

West Bay 'pleased' with Norvell well

By Holly Cogan
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West Bay Exploration Company is "pleased" with the flow of the Hilden oil well in section 16 of Norvell Township, says operations manager Tim Baker.

"We are carefully pumping at 100 barrels a day," says Baker. "The state allows up to 200 but we don't want to produce a lot of water."

He likened the flow of an oil well to sipping a malted through a straw. If you suck too hard on the straw, he explained, the foam on top comes down the side of the straw and is pulled up inside instead of the malted milk on the bottom of the glass. If oil is pumped too fast the same thing happens, he said. The water used in drilling or the gas on top of the oil can be pulled down and then pumped up instead of the oil.

"We want it to push down instead," he said

"That's why the state puts a limit at 200 barrels a day," he said. Pumping 200 barrels a day is the eventual goal, however, for Hilden well 216. The directional well was the second one drilled but the first to be ready to pump. Hilden well 116 will be tested starting next week. One reason for the delay is there is no tubing string for the well. The rig which would have been used was pulled off last week and taken to Napoleon Township for use at Lantis well 1-30.

"We'll move in another rig, a coil tubing rig," said Baker. "It is malleable steel on a coil which straightens as it goes into the well."

Of the four permits for new wells for which application has been made, the next likely candidate for drilling is on the Jennings property in Napoleon Township. Jennings 132 is southeast of the Lantis wells.

After that, Baker presumes that the state will grant the application for the Swank well in Norvell Township. Application has been made for two more wells in Napoleon Township. Before drilling a new well the company has to bring in consultants to be sure that no breeding areas for the Indiana bat are disturbed. The work of the consultants on the Hilden site took several weeks and the results of the study led to the location of the wells in a pine grove.

"I'm no expert on bats," said Baker, "but it is my understanding that they prefer older generation shag bark trees for nesting. They move out of the area in October so we would be allowed to drill from then until May when they come back."

The Brooklyn/Napoleon area is a breeding location for the Indiana bats which are an endangered species. The bats do not normally occupy housing, he said, but homeowners should be careful about killing bats until they know what kind they are dealing with. The Indiana variety is protected by federal law.