

# Devon moving ahead with plan to reuse water in western Oklahoma

Devon Energy Corp. has spent about three years developing a facility to allow reuse of water in its operations in western Oklahoma.

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More than three years of planning are coming to fruition for Devon Energy Corp.

The Oklahoma City-based oil and natural gas producer is building a massive pit between Geary and Calumet to hold produced water from nearby wells so it can be reused for future operations.

Peter McDonald, an operations engineer at Devon, said officials found that the water coming back out of its wells in western Oklahoma's Cana Shale was of sufficient quality that it could be used again, limiting the need to use surface water for hydraulic fracturing operations.

“We felt that we had the perfect opportunity to do that,” he said.

The problem was the Oklahoma Corporation Commission did not have any regulations governing water storage facilities needed for such an operation: a pit that could hold up to 500,000 barrels of water.

“They had nothing on the books at that time that covered anything of that size,” McDonald said.

Devon officials worked with state regulators to write the necessary rules, which were subject to peer review before being approved.

The company got clearance to proceed with its water recycling operation this summer.

McDonald said Devon is building a massive pit to hold flowback water on 40 acres it purchased in Canadian County. There also will be a filtering system to remove sediment from the water.

“We'll use this as our fracturing water in our leases that are around there,” he said.

The facility is expected to be completed in the middle of 2012.

Oklahoma Energy Secretary Mike Ming said he is not familiar with the Devon project, but such water-saving endeavors are not unique in the oil and natural gas industry.

“The industry is doing everything it can to reuse that water,” he said. “It allows you to gather water at your own convenience and then use it when you need it.”

Ming said such preservation efforts are advocated in the state's new energy plan.

“We think it's an area that's ripe for innovation,” he said.

Devon is installing a pipeline system to carry water between area well sites and the pit, which will cover 2,500 square feet and be 14 feet deep. The pit will have a 60 mm liner to prevent water from leaking into the ground.

McDonald said the system — which will include about 40 miles of pipe — will be able to carry water to well sites within about a 10- to 12-mile radius of the storage pit, depending on the size of the pipeline nearest the site.

He said there are about 30 potential drilling sites within range of where the pit would be built. Multiple wells could be drilled from each one.

McDonald said the water recycling facility will help Devon cut its drilling costs, but it is too soon to put a dollar figure on those savings. He said the facility should reduce truck traffic to the company's well sites.

McDonald said Devon is developing another facility west of Geary on the site of a saltwater disposal well.



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