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Southwest Kansas experiencing oil boom

By The Associated Press

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DODGE CITY — An increase in oil and gas exploration in southwestern Kansas has led to such a surge in people seeking information on oil and gas leases and land titles that Ford County has had to institute crowd control measures at the building where the searches are conducted.

So many people began crowding into the Ford County Government Center in Dodge City that the county restricted the number of people allowed in the room where the documents are contained and rented laptops to others, The Dodge City Daily Globe reported Monday (<http://bit.ly/AmnNPG>).

Register of Deeds Brenda Pogue said her office had received 1,262 documents related to oil and gas leases as of Dec. 27, compared with 781 documents in 2010.

And this summer, after the office had up to 60 people crowded in the book room, the state fire marshal told Pogue she had to limit the number of people admitted. The office now allows only 10 people per hour into the book room. Searchers are required to sign in for an hour at a time, allowing Pogue to rotate people in and out.

“Sometimes the company sends two people. Sometimes these companies send up to 30, maybe 40 people,” Pogue said. “We can’t allow that many in our back room plus my office help.”

Pogue said her office also must accommodate local businesses doing title searches. To cope with the demand, the county started renting laptop computers to people doing

title searches. The laptops are available for \$10 a day but cannot be taken from the building.

Ford County Administrator Ed Elam said the county experienced an earlier surge in people interested in wind rights, after wind farm projects began in the area. The current interest in oil and gas rights began about 18 months ago and could last until April, said Elam, who noted other southwest Kansas counties are experiencing similar demand.

"Oil exploration is kind of a big deal right now," Elam said. "We've had several oil wells developed (in southwest Kansas) in the last 12 to 18 months, which is driving the interest of developers."

The cost of oil and gas leases is driven by several factors, including the location of the property and the kind of development project an oil company is considering, said Gordon Stull, a Pratt attorney who specializes in oil and gas cases.

"I've seen leases for \$5 to \$10 an acre, and I've seen leases over \$1,000 an acre," he said.

Some leases are short-term while others can last up to three or more years, depending on the type of project being considered, Stull said.

Much of the interest in oil and gas drilling in southwest Kansas is centered on an area covering 160 miles from east to west and 100 miles from north to south along the Kansas-Oklahoma border. It has been helped by new drilling techniques unlock deposits previously out of reach, the Globe reported.

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