



(12) **DEMANDE DE BREVET CANADIEN**
CANADIAN PATENT APPLICATION

(13) **A1**

(86) Date de dépôt PCT/PCT Filing Date: 2019/01/18
(87) Date publication PCT/PCT Publication Date: 2019/07/25
(85) Entrée phase nationale/National Entry: 2020/06/26
(86) N° demande PCT/PCT Application No.: US 2019/014103
(87) N° publication PCT/PCT Publication No.: 2019/143875
(30) Priorité/Priority: 2018/01/19 (US15/875,091)

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *E21B 43/12* (2006.01),
E21B 41/00 (2006.01), *E21B 43/14* (2006.01),
E21B 43/30 (2006.01)
(71) Demandeur/Applicant:
SAUDI ARABIAN OIL COMPANY, SA
(72) Inventeurs/Inventors:
NOUI-MEHIDI, MOHAMED NABIL, SA;
CHANG, FAKUEN FRANK, SA
(74) Agent: FINLAYSON & SINGLEHURST

(54) Titre : PROCEDE DE PRODUCTION A PARTIR D'UNE ZONE PORTEUSE D'HYDROCARBURES AVEC DES
EMBRANCHEMENTS S'ETENDANT A PARTIR D'UN TROU PRINCIPAL INCLINE
(54) Title: METHOD OF PRODUCING FROM A HYDROCARBON BEARING ZONE WITH LATERALS EXTENDING
FROM AN INCLINED MAIN BORE

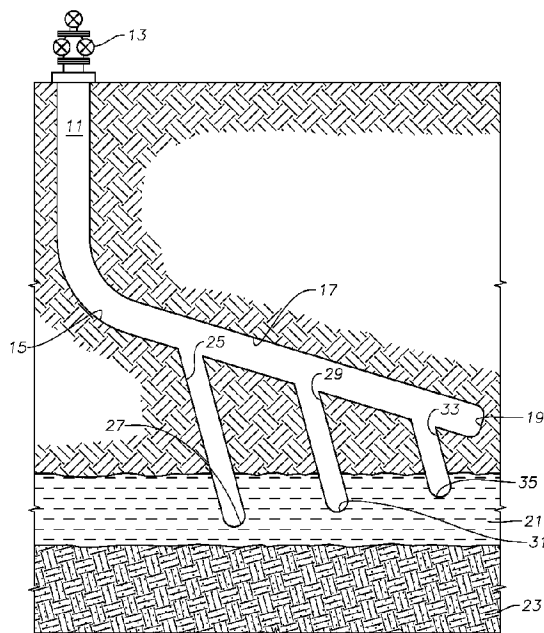


FIG. 1

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A main bore (11) is drilled with an inclined section (17) extending toward a hydrocarbon bearing earth formation (21). First and second laterals (25, 29) are drilled from the inclined section downward into the formation at a steeper angles than the inclined section. The first lateral is opened (29) to the formation at a depth greater than a depth of an opening (31) of the second lateral. After completion, well fluid flows through the openings in the first and second laterals into the inclined section of the main bore. In response to an increasing water content in the well fluid flowing up the main bore, the flow of well fluid from the first lateral is restricted.

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property
Organization
International Bureau

(43) International Publication Date
25 July 2019 (25.07.2019)



(10) International Publication Number
WO 2019/143875 A1

(51) International Patent Classification:

E21B 41/00 (2006.01) *E21B 43/30* (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:

PCT/US2019/014103

(22) International Filing Date:

18 January 2019 (18.01.2019)

(25) Filing Language:

English

(26) Publication Language:

English

(30) Priority Data:

15/875,091 19 January 2018 (19.01.2018) US

(71) Applicant: **SAUDI ARABIAN OIL COMPANY**
[SA/SA]; 1 Eastern Avenue, Dhahran, 31311 (SA).

(71) Applicant (for AG only): **ARAMCO SERVICES COMPANY** [US/US]; Two Allen Center, 1200 Smith Street, 27th Floor, Houston, TX 77002 (US).

(72) Inventors: **NOUI-MEHIDI, Mohamed, Nabil**; P.O. Box 10845, Dhahran, 31311 (SA). **CHANG, Fakuen, Frank**; P.O. Box 5614, Dhahran, 31311 (SA).

(74) Agent: **RHEBERGEN, Constance, Gall**; Bracewell LLP, P.O. Box 61389, Houston, TX 77208-1389 (US).

(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DJ, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JO, JP, KE, KG, KH, KN, KP, KR, KW, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SA, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, ST, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

(54) Title: METHOD OF PRODUCING FROM A HYDROCARBON BEARING ZONE WITH LATERALS EXTENDING FROM AN INCLINED MAIN BORE

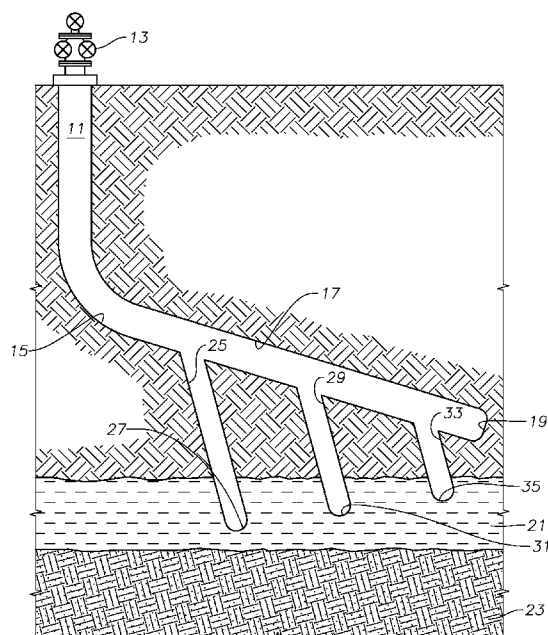


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A main bore (11) is drilled with an inclined section (17) extending toward a hydrocarbon bearing earth formation (21). First and second laterals (25, 29) are drilled from the inclined section downward into the formation at a steeper angles than the inclined section. The first lateral is opened (29) to the formation at a depth greater than a depth of an opening (31) of the second lateral. After completion, well fluid flows through the openings in the first and second laterals into the inclined section of the main bore. In response to an increasing water content in the well fluid flowing up the main bore, the flow of well fluid from the first lateral is restricted.

WO 2019/143875 A1

Published:

- *with international search report (Art. 21(3))*
- *before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments (Rule 48.2(h))*

PCT PATENT APPLICATION**METHOD OF PRODUCING FROM A HYDROCARBON BEARING ZONE WITH
LATERALS EXTENDING FROM AN INCLINED MAIN BORE****BACKGROUND****1. Field**

[0001] The present disclosure relates to producing oil from a well, and particularly to a method employing multiple laterals extending downward to an oil bearing formation from an inclined section of a main well bore.

2. Description of Prior Art

[0002] Oil may be found in thin formations or zones that overlie a water containing formation. Typically, one or more wells will be drilled into the oil bearing zone. After the well is completed, well fluid from the oil bearing zone flows into the lower part of the well and to the surface.

[0003] As the well fluid depletes oil from the oil bearing formation, water from the water bearing zone will encroach into the oil bearing zone, increasing the water content of the well fluid flowing up the well. Eventually, the water encroachment will reach a level that results in too much water flowing up the well. Various techniques may then be required to workover the well.

SUMMARY

[0004] A method of wellbore operations comprises drilling a main bore with an inclined section extending toward an earth formation. First and second laterals are drilled from the inclined section, each extending downward from the inclined section into the formation. Openings are provided in the laterals, the opening in the first lateral extending to a greater depth than the opening in the second lateral. Well fluid flows through the openings in the laterals into the inclined section of the main bore. In the event a water content in the well fluid flowing from the opening in the first lateral exceeds a water content in the well fluid flowing from the second lateral by a selected amount, the flow through the opening of the first lateral is selectively restricted relative to the flow from the opening of the second lateral.

[0005] Drilling the first and second laterals comprises inclining the laterals at a greater angle relative to horizontal than the inclined section of the main bore.

[0006] Drilling the first and second laterals comprises spacing the first and second laterals apart from each other along a length of the inclined section.

[0007] In the embodiment shown, drilling first and second laterals comprises inclining each of the laterals at an angle in a range from 45 to 90 degrees relative to horizontal.

[0008] In one embodiment, drilling first and second laterals comprises positioning an axis of each of the first and second laterals in a vertical plane.

[0009] Drilling the main bore may comprise blocking the inclined section from a direct entry of well fluid from the formation.

[0010] In the embodiment shown, the first lateral joins the inclined section at a point closer to an upper end of the main bore than the second lateral.

[0011] An inflow control device may be installed in the first lateral above the opening in the first lateral. If so, selectively restricting the flow through the opening of the first lateral comprises actuating a valve in the inflow control device.

[0012] In another embodiment, selectively restricting the flow through the opening of the first lateral comprises sealing at least a lower portion of the opening in the first lateral.

[0013] The method of wellbore operations may also comprise drilling a main bore with an inclined section extending toward but not opening into a hydrocarbon containing earth formation. A first lateral is drilled from a first junction with the inclined section downward from the inclined section into the formation at a steeper angle than the inclined section. An opening to the formation is provided in the first lateral at a first selected depth. A second lateral is drilled from a second junction with the inclined section downward from the inclined section into the formation at a steeper angle than the inclined section. An opening to the formation is provided in the second lateral to a second selected depth that is shallower than the first selected depth. The second junction is farther from an upper end of the main bore than the first junction. Well fluid flows into the first and second laterals, and from the first and second laterals into the inclined section of the main bore. In response to an increasing

water content in the well fluid flowing up the main bore, the flow of well fluid from the first lateral into the inclined section of the main bore is restricted.

[0014] An inflow control device may be installed in the first lateral. Restricting the well fluid flowing from the first lateral comprises adjusting a valve in the inflow control device.

[0015] Adjusting the valve in the inflow control device may comprise lowering a tool on a line into the inclined section of the main bore to a position adjacent the inflow control device. A signal is transmitted from the tool to the inflow control device.

[0016] Alternately, restricting the well fluid flowing from the first lateral comprises installing a seal in the first lateral.

[0017] Optionally, an upper opening may be provided in the first lateral above the seal, allowing well fluid to flow from upper opening in the first lateral.

[0018] Drilling first and second laterals may comprise inclining each of the laterals at an angle in a range from 45 to 90 degrees relative to horizontal.

[0019] The method of wellbore operations may also comprise drilling a main bore with an inclined section extending toward an earth formation. First, second and third laterals may be drilled from the inclined section, each of the first, second and third laterals extending downward from the inclined section at a steeper angle than the inclined section. Openings to the formation are provided in the first, second and third laterals. The opening in the first lateral is at a greater depth than the opening in the second lateral. The opening in the second lateral is at a greater depth than the opening in the third lateral. Well fluid flows from the formation through the openings in the first, second and third laterals into the inclined section of the main bore. Any flow of well fluid from the formation directly into the inclined section of the main bore may be prevented. In response to a water content of the well fluid flowing up the main bore, at least a lower portion of the opening in the first lateral may be restricted, and flow through the openings in the second and third laterals into the inclined section of the main bore may be continued. In response to a subsequent water content of the well fluid flowing up the main bore, at least a lower portion of the opening of the second lateral may be restricted, and flow through the opening in the third lateral into the inclined section of the main bore may be continued.

[0020] The first, second and third laterals have first, second and third junctions, respectively, with the inclined section. The first junction is shallower than the second junction, and the second junction is shallower than the third junction.

[0021] Inflow control devices may be installed in the first lateral and in the second lateral. Flow is restricted through the opening in the first lateral by adjusting a valve in the inflow control device in the first lateral. Flow is restricted through the opening in the second lateral by adjusting a valve in the inflow control device in the second lateral.

[0022] Alternately, flow through the opening in the first lateral may be restricted by installing a seal in the first lateral, blocking the opening in the first lateral.

[0023] Optionally, an upper opening may be provided in the first lateral above the seal, enabling well fluid to flow through the upper opening into the first lateral.

[0024] In one embodiment, a well configuration comprises a main bore with an inclined section extending toward an earth formation. First and second laterals each extend downward from the inclined section into the formation. The first lateral has an opening to the earth formation and the second lateral has an opening to the same earth formation. The opening of the first lateral is at a greater depth than the opening of the second lateral. The openings enable well fluid to flow into the laterals and from the laterals into the inclined section of the main bore.

[0025] In one embodiment, each of the first and second lateral inclines at a greater angle relative to horizontal than the inclined section of the main bore.

[0026] In one embodiment, each of the first and second laterals has an axis in a vertical plane.

[0027] The first lateral joins the inclined section uphole from the second lateral in one embodiment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0028] Some of the features and benefits of the present disclosure having been stated, others will become apparent as the description proceeds when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0029] Figure 1 is a schematic sectional view of an example of laterals extending downward from an inclined section of a main wellbore into a hydrocarbon bearing zone.

[0030] Figure 2 is a schematic sectional view of the laterals of Figure 1 with inflow control devices installed.

[0031] Figure 3 is a schematic sectional view of the laterals of Figure 1 with a control tool being lowered on a line into the inclined section of the main bore.

[0032] While the advantages will be described in connection with disclosed embodiments, it will be understood that it is not intended to be limited to those embodiments. On the contrary, it is intended to cover all alternatives, modifications, and equivalents, as may be included within the spirit and scope as defined by the appended claims.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0033] The method and system of the present disclosure will now be described more fully with reference to the accompanying drawings in which embodiments are shown. The method and system of the present disclosure may be in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the illustrated embodiments set forth; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey its scope to those skilled in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout. In an embodiment, usage of the term “about” includes +/- 5% of the cited magnitude. In an embodiment, usage of the term “substantially” includes +/- 5% of the cited magnitude.

[0034] It is to be further understood that the scope of the present disclosure is not limited to the exact details of construction, operation, exact materials, or embodiments shown and described, as modifications and equivalents will be apparent to one skilled in the art. In the drawings and specification, there have been disclosed illustrative embodiments and, although specific terms are employed, they are used in a generic and descriptive sense only and not for the purpose of limitation.

[0035] Figure 1 schematically illustrates a well having a main bore 11 with a conventional production tree 13 at the upper end. Main bore 11 has a vertical portion extending downward from tree 13 to a curved section or heel 15 that joins an inclined section 17. Inclined section 17 may be straight, but it inclines downward. The angle of inclination of inclined section 17 may vary and is illustrated to be about 10 to 15 degrees relative to horizontal as an example.

Main bore 11, including its inclined section 17, may be cased with a casing cemented in place.

[0036] Inclined section 17 has a lower end or toe 19 that is schematically shown to be a short distance above an earth formation 21 that is a hydrocarbon or oil bearing zone. Inclined section 17 could extend into oil bearing zone 21, but if so, in this example it is sealed from the well fluid in oil bearing zone 21. Oil bearing zone 21 is illustrated as overlying an earth formation 23 that is a water bearing zone. Oil bearing zone 21 may contain some interspersed water droplets, but it will also have significant quantities of oil at least initially. Water bearing zone 21 will mostly contain water.

[0037] Using conventional techniques, the operator drills a first lateral 25 from a first junction with inclined section 17. First lateral 25 is a bore extending downward from inclined section 17 into hydrocarbon bearing zone 21. First lateral 25 may also be straight, but it inclines at a much steeper angle than inclined section 17. As an example, the angle of first lateral 25 relative to horizontal may be 45 to 90 degrees, thus it could be vertical. First lateral 25 has an axis that may be in a vertical plane.

[0038] First lateral 25 has an opening 27 schematically illustrated that communicates first lateral 25 with the well fluid in oil bearing zone 21. Opening 27 could be an open hole or uncased portion of lateral 25. Opening 27 could alternately comprise a tubular screen with apertures. First lateral 25 could be completely cased with casing cemented in place and a casing shoe closing the lower end. In that instance, opening 27 would comprise perforations formed in the casing in a conventional manner. The perforations may extend over a length of first lateral 25. Regardless of the configuration of opening 27, its lowest extent, such as its lowest perforation, will be at a selected first depth within oil bearing formation 21. That first depth will be above water bearing zone 23.

[0039] A second lateral 29 joins inclined section 17 at a second junction downhole from the junction of first lateral 25 with inclined section 17. Second lateral 29 is also a bore extending downward from inclined section 17 into hydrocarbon bearing zone 21. Second lateral 29 may also be straight and inclining at a much steeper angle than inclined section 17. In this example, second lateral 29 is parallel with first lateral 25, thus it is at an angle relative to horizontal of 45 to 90 degrees. Second lateral 29 has an axis that is in the same vertical plane as first lateral 25 in this embodiment.

[0040] Second lateral 29 has an opening 31 that communicates second lateral 29 with the well fluid in oil bearing zone 21. Opening 31 could be an open hole or uncased portion of second lateral 29. Opening 31 could comprise a tubular screen with apertures. Second lateral 29 could be completely cased with casing cemented in place and a casing shoe closing the lower end. In that instance, opening 31 would also comprise a set of perforations made along a length of the casing in second lateral 29 in a conventional manner. Regardless of the configuration of opening 31, its lowest extent, such as its lowest perforation, will be at a selected second depth within oil bearing formation 21 that is shallower than the depth of the lowest extent of opening 27 in first lateral 25. That is, the lowest extent of opening 31 is at a higher level in oil bearing zone 21 than the lowest extent of opening 27 in first lateral 27. The lowest extent of opening 31 is also above water bearing zone 23. The distance from the lowest extent of opening 31 to the junction of second lateral 29 with inclined section 17 is less than the distance from the lowest extent of opening 27 to the junction of first lateral 25 with inclined section 17.

[0041] In this example, a third lateral 33 joins inclined section 17 at a junction closer to inclined section lower end 19 than the junction of second lateral 29 with inclined section 17. The junction of third lateral 33 with inclined section 17 is downhole from the junction of second lateral 29 with inclined section 17. Third lateral 33 is also a bore extending downward from inclined section 17 into hydrocarbon bearing zone 21. Third lateral 33 may also be straight, but it also inclines at a much steeper angle than inclined section 17, such as 45 to 90 degrees relative to horizontal. In this example, third lateral 33 has an axis that is parallel with the axes of first lateral 25 and second lateral 29. The axes of first lateral 25, second lateral 29 and third lateral 33 are in the same vertical plane in this embodiment.

[0042] Third lateral 33 has an opening 35 that communicates third lateral 33 with well fluid in oil bearing zone 21. Opening 35 could also be an open hole or uncased portion of third lateral 33. Opening 35 could comprise a tubular screen with apertures. Third lateral 33 could be completely cased with casing cemented in place and a casing shoe closing the lower end. In that instance, opening 35 would comprise perforations formed along a length of the casing in a conventional manner. Regardless of the configuration of opening 35, its lowest extent, such as its lowest perforation, will be at a selected third depth within oil bearing formation 21 that is shallower than the depths of the lowest extents of opening 27 in first lateral 25 and opening 31 in second lateral 29. The lowest extent of opening 35 is above water zone 23 and

at a higher level in oil bearing zone 21 than the lowest extent of opening 27 in first lateral 25 and opening 31 in second lateral 29. The distance from the lowest extent of opening 35 to the junction of third lateral 33 with inclined section 17 is less than the distance from the lowest extent of opening 31 to the junction of second lateral 29 with inclined section 17.

[0043] Figure 2 shows an inflow control device or valve (ICV) 37 installed in an upper portion of first lateral 25. Second lateral 29 also has an ICV 39, and third lateral 33 has an ICV 41. ICV's 37, 39 and 41 may be identical. Each ICV 37, 39, 41 comprises an assembly with a bore through it containing a valve 43 that opens and closes the bore. Valve 43 could also be a type of a choke that may be adjusted to partially open the bore to meter the flow of well fluid flowing through the bore. In addition, ICV's 37, 39, 41 have one or more packer elements 45 that expand into sealing engagement with the side walls of laterals 25, 29, 33, forcing all well fluid flowing into laterals 25, 29, and 33 to flow through the bores of the ICV's.

[0044] Valves 43 may be electrically powered by a battery. Figure 3 illustrates a downhole tool 47 lowered on a line 49, which may be a wireline or coiled tubing. Tool 47 has a transmitter that will send a wireless signal a short distance through inclined section 17 for receipt by the closest one of the ICV's 37, 39, 41, which is illustrated to be ICV 37. The signal will actuate valve 43 to open, close, or partially close the bore through ICV 37. The signal may also be used to re-charge the battery of the particular valve 43.

[0045] The lowest extent of each opening 27, 31 and 35 will be selected to be initially above any significant level of water within oil bearing zone 21. Valves 43 may be initially fully open, allowing well fluid that is primarily oil to flow through each ICV 37, 39 and 41. The oil from each lateral 25, 29 and 33 flows into inclined section 17 and may commingle as it flows up main bore 11. In this example, no well fluid flows directly into inclined section 17 other than the well fluid flowing through the three laterals 25, 29 and 33.

[0046] As the oil is depleted from oil bearing zone 21, water from water bearing zone 23 will encroach upward into oil bearing zone 21. If so, the deepest opening 27 should begin experiencing a higher water content than the water contents of the well fluid flowing through the shallower openings 31, 35. The increased water content could be detected by analyzing the commingled flow at production tree 13. Also, the increased water content in first lateral 25 could separately be detected by the use of a logging tool lowered on a wireline or coiled

tubing into inclined section 17. The logging tool could also separately measure the water contents of the well fluid flowing from second and third laterals 29 and 33.

[0047] If merited, the operator would then either close or partially close valve 43 in ICV 37 by lowering tool 47 (Fig. 3) to a point close to ICV 37 and sending a signal to ICV 37. If the operator completely closes valve 43 in first lateral ICV 37, all of the well fluid flowing up main bore 11 would be from second and third laterals 29, 33. The operator may choose to partially close valve 43 in first lateral ICV 37, reducing the flow rate of liquid flowing from first lateral 25.

[0048] Eventually, water from water bearing zone 23 may begin encroaching into opening 31 in second lateral 29. If so, the water content of well fluid flowing from second lateral 29 would likely be higher than the water content of well fluid flowing from third lateral 33 because of the deeper depth of the lowest extent of second lateral opening 31. The operator may fully or partially close valve 43 in second lateral ICV 39 in the same manner. If closed fully and if first lateral ICV 37 is closed completely, all of the well fluid flowing up wellbore 11 will now be from third lateral 33. As the water content from third lateral 33 increases, the operator may wish to meter the flow through third lateral 33 by adjusting valve 43 in third lateral ICV 41. That adjustment could also be performed by lowering tool 47 (Fig. 3).

[0049] In an alternate method, ICV's are not employed to restrict flow in the event of higher water content in the well fluid. Instead, the operator may restrict flow through the first lateral 25 by injecting a sealant into first lateral 25, blocking opening 27. The sealant may be a conventional chemical, such as cement, crosslinked polymers, resins, silicates and the like. If the opening in first lateral 25 comprises a set of perforations, the operator may choose to seal off only a lower portion of those perforations, allowing well fluid to continue flowing through an upper portion of the set of perforations. Alternately, if the operator does not wish to fully close first lateral 25, he could perforate casing in the lateral above the sealant through conventional techniques such as shaped charges or water jetting, creating upper openings in first lateral 25. Well fluid would then flow through the upper openings of first lateral 25. The same alternate procedures could also be followed to restrict flow through opening 31 in second lateral 29.

[0050] Providing multiple laterals extending into the same formation to different depths from an inclined wellbore section has advantages. The multiple laterals reduce early water

breakthrough in the well by balancing the pressure distribution along the length of the well. Reducing early water breakthrough delays workover operations that may be needed.

[0051] The present improvement described is well adapted to carry out the objects and attain the ends and advantages mentioned, as well as others that are inherent. While embodiments of the present description have been given for purposes of disclosure, numerous changes exist in the details of procedures for accomplishing the desired results. These changes will readily suggest themselves to those skilled in the art, and are intended to be encompassed within the spirit of the present disclosure and the scope of the appended claims. For example, although three laterals are shown, only two or more than three could be employed.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is.

1. A method of wellbore operations comprising:

drilling a main bore (11) with an inclined section (17) extending toward an earth formation (21); characterized by

drilling first and second laterals (25, 29) from the inclined section, each extending downward from the inclined section into the formation;

providing an opening (27) in the first lateral and an opening (29) in the second lateral, the opening in the first lateral extending to a greater depth than the opening in the second lateral;

flowing well fluid through the openings in the laterals into the inclined section of the main bore; and

selectively restricting the flow through the opening of the first lateral relative to the flow from the opening of the second lateral in the event a water content in the well fluid flowing from the opening in the first lateral exceeds a water content in the well fluid flowing from the second lateral by a selected amount.

2. The method of claim 1, where drilling first and second laterals comprises inclining each of the laterals at a greater angle relative to horizontal than the inclined section of the main bore.

3. The method of any preceding claim, where drilling first and second laterals comprises spacing the first and second laterals apart from each other along a length of the inclined section.

4. The method of any preceding claim, where drilling first and second laterals comprises inclining each of the laterals at an angle in a range from 45 to 90 degrees relative to horizontal.

5. The method of any preceding claim, where drilling first and second laterals comprises positioning an axis of each of the first and second laterals in a vertical plane.

6. The method of any proceeding claim, where drilling the main bore comprises blocking the inclined section from a direct entry of well fluid from the formation.

7. The method of any proceeding claim, where the first lateral joins the inclined section uphole from the second lateral.

8. The method of any proceeding claim, further comprising:

installing an inflow control device (37) in the first lateral above the opening in the first lateral; and

where selectively restricting the flow through the opening of the first lateral comprises actuating a valve (43) in the inflow control device in the first lateral.

9. The method of any proceeding claim, where selectively restricting the flow through the opening of the first lateral comprises sealing at least a lower portion of the opening the first lateral.

10. A method of wellbore operations comprising:

drilling a main bore (11) with an inclined section (17) extending toward but not opening into a hydrocarbon containing earth formation (21);

drilling a first lateral (25) from a first junction with the inclined section downward from the inclined section into the formation at a steeper angle than the inclined section, and opening the first lateral to the formation at a first selected depth;

drilling a second lateral (29) from a second junction with the inclined section downward from the inclined section into the formation at a steeper angle than the inclined section, and opening the second lateral to the formation at a second selected depth that is shallower than the first selected depth, the second junction being downhole from the first junction;

flowing well fluid into the first and second laterals, and from the first and second laterals into the inclined section of the main bore; and

in response to an increasing water content in the well fluid flowing up the main bore, restricting the flow of well fluid from the first lateral into the inclined section of the main bore.

11. The method according to claim 10, further comprising:
 - installing an inflow control device (37) in the first lateral; where
 - restricting the well fluid flowing from the first lateral comprises adjusting a valve (43) in the inflow control device.
12. The method according to claim 11, where:
 - adjusting the valve in the inflow control device comprises lowering a tool (47) on a line (49) into the inclined section of the main bore to a position adjacent the inflow control device; and
 - transmitting a signal from the tool to the inflow control device.
13. The method according to claim 10, where:
 - restricting the well fluid flowing from the first lateral comprises installing a seal in the first lateral.
14. The method according to claim 13, further comprising:
 - providing an upper opening in the first lateral above the seal; and
 - flowing well fluid through the upper opening into the first lateral.
15. The method according to claim 10-14, where drilling first and second laterals comprises inclining each of the laterals at an angle in a range from 45 to 90 degrees relative to horizontal.
16. A method of wellbore operations comprising:
 - (a) drilling a main bore (11) with an inclined section (13) extending toward an earth formation (21);
 - (b) drilling first, second and third laterals (25, 29, 33) from the inclined section, each of the first, second and third laterals extending downward from the inclined section at a steeper angle than the inclined section;
 - (c) providing in each of the first, second and third laterals an opening (27, 31, 35) to the formation, the opening in the first lateral being at a greater depth than the opening in

the second lateral, and the opening in the second lateral being at a greater depth than the opening in the third lateral;

(d) flowing well fluid from the formation through the openings in the first, second and third laterals into the inclined section of the main bore, and preventing any flow of well fluid from the formation directly into the inclined section of the main bore;

(e) in response to a water content of the well fluid flowing up the main bore, restricting at least a lower portion of the opening of the first lateral and continuing to flow well fluid from the openings in the second and third laterals into the inclined section of the main bore; and following step (e),

(f) in response to a subsequent water content of the well fluid flowing up the main bore, restricting at least a lower portion of the opening of the second lateral and continuing to flow well fluid from the opening in the third lateral into the inclined section of the main bore.

17. The method according to claim 16, where:

step (b) comprises drilling the first, second and third laterals from the inclined section from first, second and third junctions, respectively, with the inclined section; and

the first junction is uphole from the second junction and the second junction is uphole from the third junction.

18. The method according to claim 16 or claim 17, further comprising:

installing an inflow control device (37, 39) in the first lateral and in the second lateral; where

step (e) comprises adjusting a valve (43) in the inflow control device in the first lateral; and

step (f) comprises adjusting a valve in the inflow control device in the second lateral.

19. The method according to claim 16, where:

step (e) comprises installing a seal in the first lateral blocking the opening in the first lateral.

20. The method according to claim 19, further comprising:

providing an upper opening in the first lateral above the seal; and

again flowing well fluid through the upper opening into the first lateral.

21. A well configuration, comprising:

a main bore (11) with an inclined section (17) extending toward an earth formation (21);

first and second laterals (25, 29), each extending downward from the inclined section into the earth formation; and

an opening (27) to the earth formation in the first lateral and an opening (29) to the same earth formation in the second lateral, the opening in the first lateral being at a greater depth than the opening in the second lateral, the openings enabling well fluid to flow into the laterals and from the laterals into the inclined section of the main bore.

22. The configuration of claim 21, wherein each of the first and second lateral inclines at a greater angle relative to horizontal than the inclined section of the main bore.

23. The configuration of claim 21 or claim 22, wherein each of the first and second laterals has an axis in a vertical plane.

24. The configuration of claim 21-23, where the first lateral joins the inclined section uphole from the second lateral.

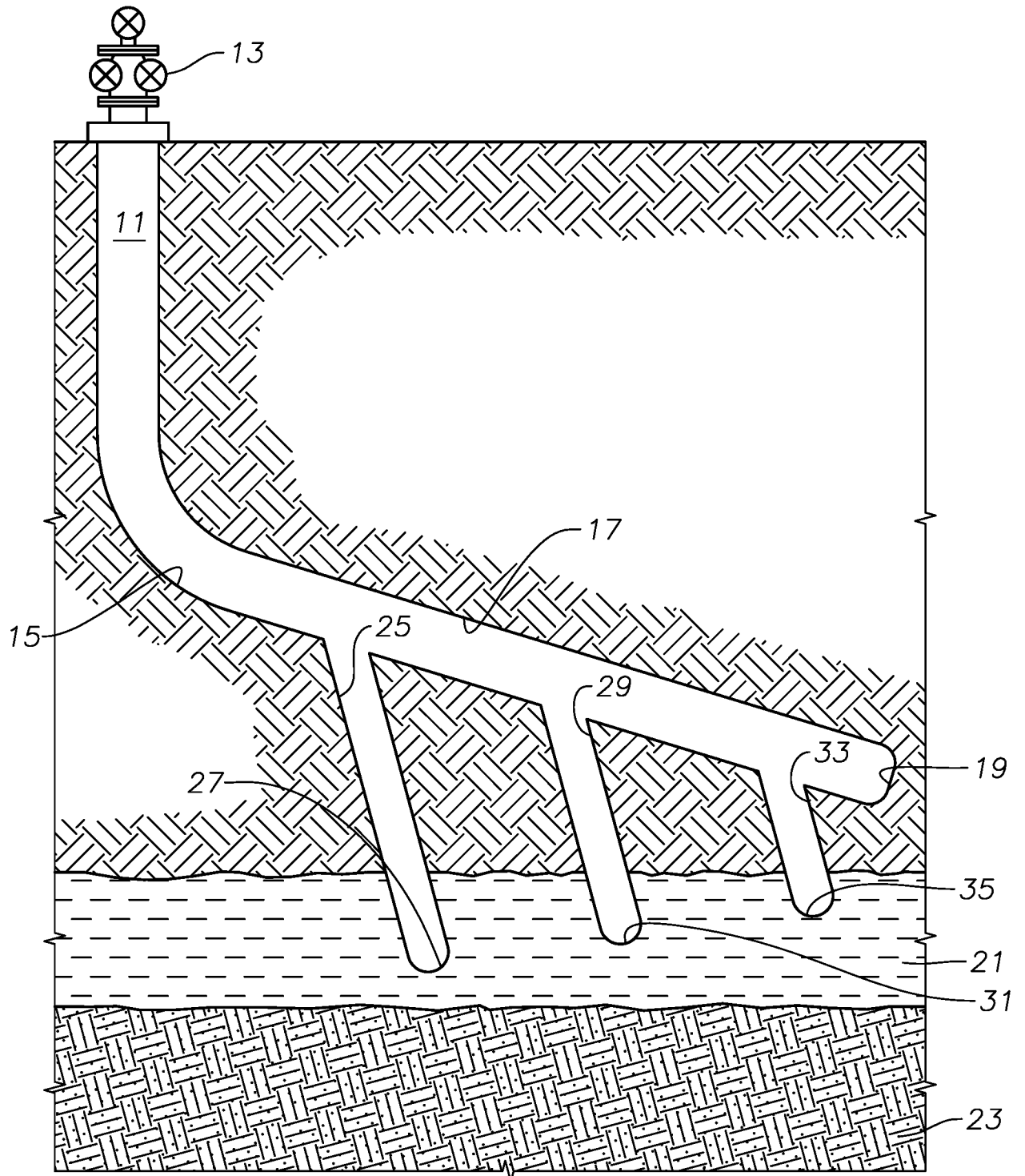


FIG. 1

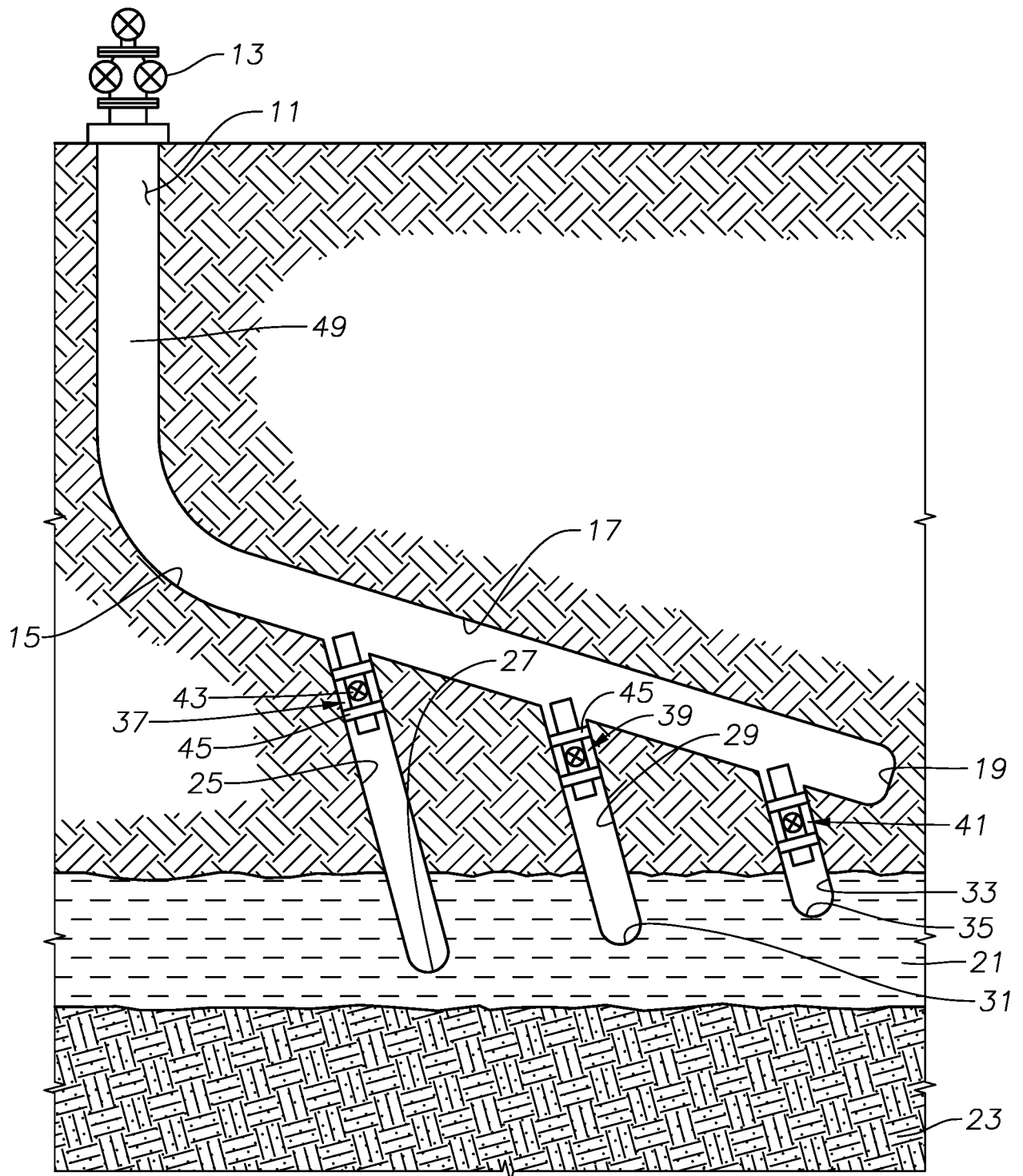


FIG. 2

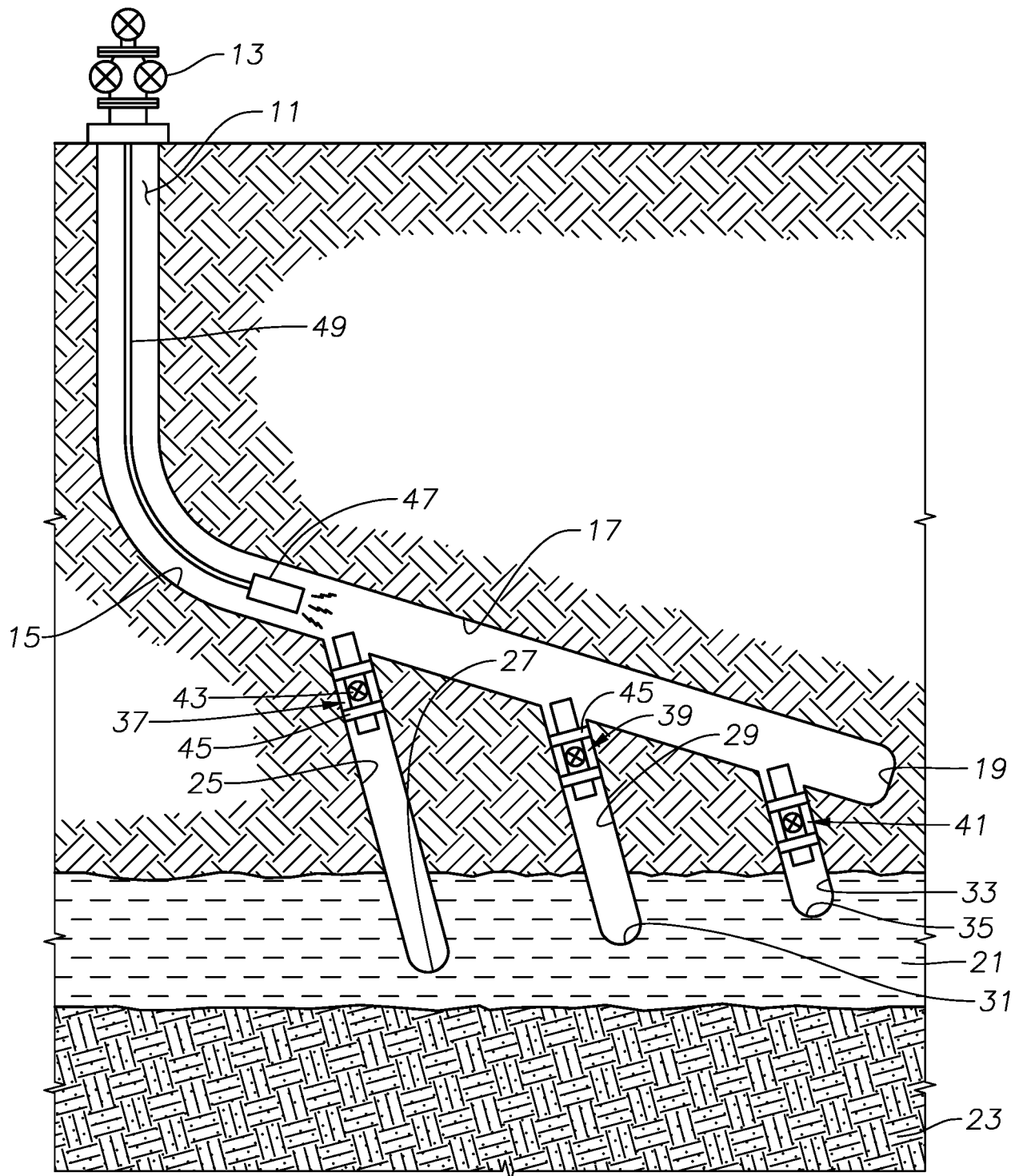


FIG. 3

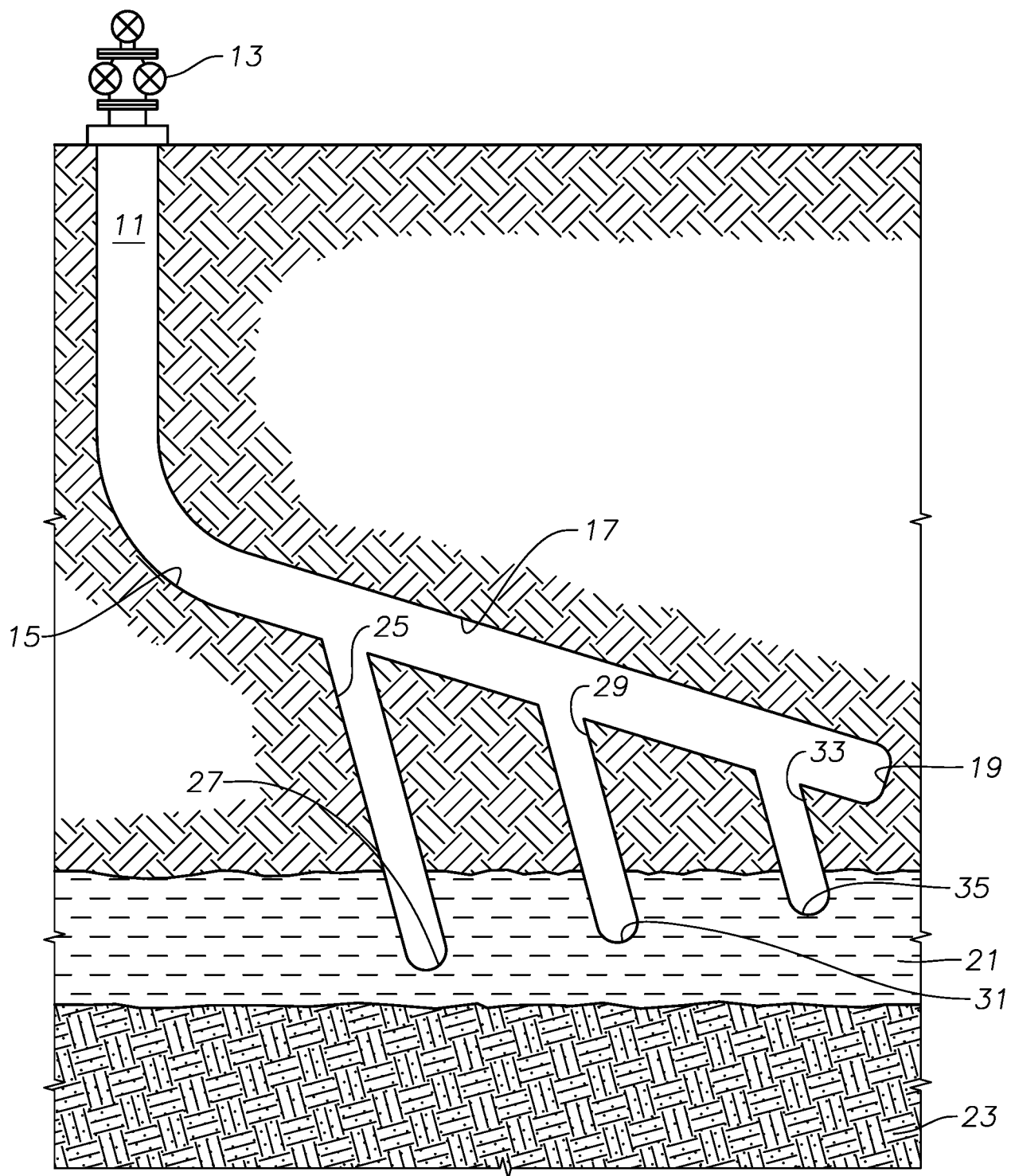


FIG. 1