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(54) **INVERT EMULSION BASED DRILLING FLUID AND METHODS OF USING SAME**

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See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A drilling fluid composition which includes a base fluid, one or more additives, and a viscosifier package. The base fluid is an invert emulsion comprising oil and water. Further, the one or more additives is chosen from an emulsifier, a weighting material, a fluid-loss control additive, or an alkaline compound. The viscosifier package includes a fatty acid having 6 or more carbon atoms and an aliphatic polyester. The drilling fluid composition has a yield point of from 30 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft² and a low shear yield point of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 40 lb/100 ft². The associated method of drilling a subterranean well including operating a drill in a wellbore in the presence of the drilling fluid composition is also provided.

19 Claims, No Drawings

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**INVERT EMULSION BASED DRILLING
FLUID AND METHODS OF USING SAME****CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS**

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/454,189 filed Feb. 3, 2017 and U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/454,192 filed Feb. 3, 2017, both of which are incorporated by reference herein in their entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

Embodiments of the present disclosure generally relate to drilling fluid compositions used for drilling oil wells and to methods of drilling subterranean wells using the drilling fluid compositions. More specifically, embodiments of the present disclosure generally relate to packer fluid compositions comprising a viscosifier package comprising a combination of a fatty acid and an aliphatic polyester.

BACKGROUND

Oil and gas hydrocarbons are naturally occurring in some subterranean formations. During drilling operations, a drilling fluid, which may also be referred to as drilling mud, is circulated through the wellbore to cool the drill bit, to convey rock cuttings to the surface, or to support the wellbore against collapse of the wellbore and against intrusion of fluids from the formation, among other purposes. One type of drilling fluid includes packer fluids which are pumped into an annular opening between the casing and the wellbore wall or between adjacent and concentric strings of pipe extending into the wellbore. Packer fluids are also useful for the containment of reservoirs via hydrostatic pressure and reduction of the pressure gradient between the wellbore wall and casing to prevent wellbore collapse. In certain operations, packer fluids are also used to contact a packer, such as a swellable packer or bridge plug, and can be used for sand control, gravel packing, and workover operations. Drilling fluids, including packer fluids, are formulated to have certain fluid characteristics, such as density and rheology for example, which allow the drilling fluid to perform these functions.

SUMMARY

However, there is an ongoing need for drilling fluids, and specifically packer fluids, which are viscous, insulative, and pumpable at low surface temperatures, such as below 0° C.

Embodiments of the present disclosure are directed to drilling fluid compositions having a viscosifier package comprising a combination of a fatty acid and aliphatic polyester and methods for drilling a subterranean well using the drilling fluid compositions having the viscosifier package.

According to one or more embodiments, a drilling fluid composition includes a base fluid, one or more additives, and a viscosifier package. The base fluid is an invert emulsion comprising oil and water. Further, the one or more additives is chosen from an emulsifier, a weighting material, a fluid-loss control additive, or an alkaline compound. The viscosifier package includes a fatty acid having 6 or more carbon atoms and an aliphatic polyester. The drilling fluid composition has a yield point of from 30 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft² measured according to the formula: yield point=

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$[2 \times (300 \text{ rpm shear rate})] - (600 \text{ rpm shear rate})$ and a low shear yield point of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 40 lb/100 ft² measured according to the formula: low shear yield point= $[2 \times (3 \text{ rpm shear rate})] - (6 \text{ rpm shear rate})$.

5 According to another aspect, a method of drilling a subterranean well includes operating a drill in a wellbore in the presence of a drilling fluid composition. The drilling fluid composition includes a base fluid, one or more additives, and a viscosifier package. The base fluid is an invert emulsion comprising oil and water. Further, the one or more additives is chosen from an emulsifier, a weighting material, a fluid-loss control additive, or an alkaline compound. The viscosifier package includes a fatty acid having 6 or more carbon atoms and an aliphatic polyester. The drilling fluid composition has a yield point of from 30 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft² measured according to the formula: yield point= $[2 \times (300 \text{ rpm shear rate})] - (600 \text{ rpm shear rate})$ and a low shear yield point of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 40 lb/100 ft² measured according to the formula: low shear yield point= $[2 \times (3 \text{ rpm shear rate})] - (6 \text{ rpm shear rate})$.

Additional features and advantages of the described embodiments will be set forth in the detailed description which follows, and in part will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art from that description or recognized by practicing the described embodiments, including the detailed description which follows and the claims.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Embodiments of the present disclosure are directed to viscosifier packages for drilling fluids, in particular to drilling fluid compositions incorporating the viscosifier package. The viscosifier package is a combination of a fatty acid and an aliphatic polyester. An example drilling fluid composition incorporating the viscosifier package includes a base fluid, one or more additives including emulsifiers, weighting material, fluid-loss control additives, or alkaline compounds, and the viscosifier package with a fatty acid having 6 or more carbon atoms and an aliphatic polyester. The drilling fluid composition with the viscosifier package comprising both a fatty acid and an aliphatic polyester has enhanced rheology compared to a drilling fluid with neither a fatty acid nor an aliphatic polyester or with only a fatty acid.

To drill a subterranean well, a drill string, including a drill bit and drill collars to weight the drill bit, is inserted into a predrilled hole and rotated to cause the drill bit to cut into the rock at the bottom of the hole. The drilling operation produces rock fragments. To remove the rock fragments from the bottom of the wellbore, a drilling fluid, such as the drilling fluid composition, is pumped down through the drill string to the drill bit. The drilling fluid cools the drill bit and lifts the rock fragments known as cuttings away from the drill bit. The drilling fluid carries the cuttings upwards as the drilling fluid is recirculated back to the surface. At the surface, the cuttings are removed from the drilling fluid through a secondary operation, and the drilling fluid is recirculated back down the drill string to the bottom of the wellbore for collection of further cuttings. It will be appreciated by one skilled in the art that multiple terms familiar to those skilled in the art may be used to describe the same thing. For example, a subterranean well may alternatively be called a borehole or wellbore and usage of a single term is meant to encompass each of the related terms as well.

Drilling fluids include drilling muds, packer fluids, and completion fluids. As used herein, "drilling fluid" means any fluid used to aid the drilling of boreholes into subterranean formations. As used herein, "completion fluids" are solids-

free liquid used to “complete” an oil or gas well. Specifically, this fluid is placed in the well to facilitate final operations prior to initiation of production, such as setting screens production liners, downhole valves or shooting perforations into the producing zone. The fluid is meant to control a well should downhole hardware fail, without damaging the producing formation or completion components. As used herein, a packer fluid is a fluid that is left in the annular region of a well between tubing and outer casing above a packer. The main functions of a packer fluid are: (1) to provide hydrostatic pressure in order to lower differential pressure across the sealing element, (2) to lower differential pressure on the wellbore and casing to prevent collapse and (3) to protect metals and elastomers from corrosion. Generically, drilling fluids serve a number of functions with different types specializing in a particular function or functions. In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition assists in the removal of cuttings from the bottom of a borehole during drilling operations. The drilling fluid composition suspends the cuttings and weighted material transports the cutting to the borehole surface with the drilling fluid composition. Additionally, the drilling fluid composition may absorb gases in the borehole, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), and methane (CH₄), and transport them to the borehole surface for release, sequestration, or burn-off. In further embodiments, the drilling fluid composition also provides a cooling and lubrication functionality for cooling and lubrication of the bit and drill string utilized in boring operations. The drilling fluid composition additionally provides buoyancy to the drill string relieving the tension on the drill string as the length of the borehole increases. In embodiments, the drilling fluid composition also controls subsurface pressures. Specifically, the drilling fluid composition provides hydrostatic pressure in the borehole to provide support to the sidewalls of the borehole and prevent the sidewalls from collapsing and caving in on the drill string. Additionally, the drilling fluid composition provides hydrostatic pressure in the bore to prevent fluids in the downhole formations from flowing into the borehole during drilling operations.

Under certain extreme downhole conditions, such as excessive temperature or difficult formations, some of the properties of the drilling fluid may be altered. For example, interaction of a drilling fluid with a formation having swelling clay, excessive solids content, or both, or subjecting the drilling fluid to extreme downhole temperatures. The temperatures, which range from surface temperature (ambient temperature) up to 500° F. (260° C.), may cause the drilling fluid to thicken or thin, excessively increase or decrease in viscosity, or any combination of these. Controlling the rheology of the drilling fluid can help to prevent barite sag, good cuttings disposal from the wellbore. In some drilling scenarios, a drilling fluid having an increased density, and therefore increased solids content, may enable drilling of a pressurized formation or may be used to control and kill a flowing downhole formation. A flowing downhole formation refers to a formation in which the fluid in the formation is flowing into the wellbore. The increased concentration of solids and increased density of the drilling fluids used in these applications increase the ability of the drilling fluids to support the wellbore and provide enhanced hydrostatic pressure to prevent fluids in the formation from flowing into the wellbore.

The viscosifier package imparts enhanced rheology to the drilling fluid composition thereby gelling the drilling fluid composition. The synergistic effect of both the fatty acid and the aliphatic polyester imparts the enhanced rheology. With-

out wishing to be bound by theory, it is believed that the aliphatic polyester undergoes hydrolysis to create smaller chain products which along with the fatty acid results in the synergistic combination and increased rheology of the drilling fluid composition. For example, polylactic acid may undergo hydrolysis to generate lactic acid. The lactic acid, which has a smaller chain than polylactic acid, along with the fatty acid generates a synergistic combination which increases the rheology of the fluid. Mixing of lactic acid and fatty acid in the fluid at the surface will lead to a thick fluid with a high yield point (YP). Such a fluid may be difficult to pump. Smaller chain lactic acid and longer chain fatty acid can lead to good packing of the molecules at the oil-water interface in the drilling fluid thereby enhancing the rheology of the fluid.

In one or more embodiments, the weight ratio of the fatty acid to the aliphatic polyester is in the range of 1:60 to 60:1. In further embodiments, the weight ratio of the fatty acid to the aliphatic polyester is in the range of 1:40 to 40:1, 1:20 to 20:1, 1:10 to 10:1, 1:5 to 5:1, 1:4 to 4:1, 1:3 to 3:1, 1:3 to 2:1, or 1:3 to 1:1. In yet further embodiments, the weight ratio of the fatty acid to the aliphatic polyester are in the range of 1:3 to 2:3 or approximately 1:2.

In various embodiments, the aliphatic polyester comprises one or more polyesters chosen from polylactic acid, polyglycolic acid, poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid), polycaprolactone, and polyhydroxybutyrate.

A fatty acid is a carboxylic acid with a long aliphatic chain, which is either saturated or unsaturated. Most naturally occurring fatty acids have an unbranched chain of an even number of carbon atoms, from 4 to 28. In one or more embodiments, the fatty acid is a long chain fatty acid having a carbon chain of 12 to 36 carbons. In further embodiments, the drilling fluid composition comprises fatty acid with a carbon chain of 14 to 24 carbons, 16 to 22 carbons, or 16 to 18 carbons.

As stated above, the drilling fluid composition includes at least a base fluid, the viscosifier package, and one or more additives, which may be used to change one or more characteristics of the drilling fluid. In one or more embodiments the drilling fluid composition comprises from 0.33 to 15 pounds per barrel (lb/bbl) of the viscosifier package, based on the total weight of the drilling fluid composition. The viscosifier package must be present in sufficient quantity to gel the drilling fluid composition, but not at an excessive quantity to impede other properties of the drilling fluid composition. Specifically, the amount of viscosifier must be controlled as too little viscosifier will not result in gelling while too much will result in excessive gelling. In further embodiments, the drilling fluid composition comprises from 0.33 to 20 lb/bbl, 0.33 to 15 lb/bbl, 0.33 to 8 lb/bbl, 0.33 to 10 lb/bbl, 1 to 15 lb/bbl, 1 to 10 lb/bbl, 1 to 5 lb/bbl, 3 to 15 lb/bbl, 3 to 10 lb/bbl, or 3 to 5 lb/bbl of the viscosifier package. In yet further embodiments, the drilling fluid composition comprises from 4 to 10 lb/bbl, 4 to 8 lb/bbl, 4 to 5 lb/bbl, or approximately 4.5 lb/bbl of the viscosifier package.

In one or more embodiments, the base fluid of the drilling fluid composition may be a water-in-oil emulsion known as an invert emulsion. Smaller chain lactic acid and longer chain fatty acids may lead to enhanced packing of the molecules at the oil-water interface in the drilling fluid, thereby enhancing the rheology of the fluid. The enhanced packing of the molecules would not work in a water based drilling fluid.

In water-in-oil emulsions or invert emulsions, oil is a continuous phase and water is dispersed in the continuous

oil phase by emulsification so that the drilling fluid does not have a distinct water layer. The oil may be a natural oil or a synthetic oil. The choice of oils may vary based on multiple factors. For example, the choice of oils may depend on the availability of the oil, environmental concerns and cost. Diesel is more readily available and thus more cost effective but environmentally unfriendly. Mineral oils and synthetic oils are environmentally friendly but can be costly. The water in the base fluid may include one or more of deionized, tap, distilled or fresh waters; natural, brackish and saturated salt waters; natural, salt dome, hydrocarbon formation produced or synthetic brines; filtered or untreated seawaters; mineral waters; and other potable and non-potable waters containing one or more dissolved salts, minerals or organic materials. Normally, a brine is chosen as the preferred internal phase. This is done to maintain the osmotic balance between the fluid and the formation. Typically calcium chloride brine having a concentration between 10% w/w to 39% w/w of solution is chosen as the internal phase. The calcium chloride brine is formed from water and CaCl_2 . In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition comprises from 10 to 45 lb/bbl, 20 to 40 lb/bbl, 25 lb/bbl to 35 lb/bbl, or approximately 30 lb/bbl of the CaCl_2 . In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition comprises from 30 to 150 lb/bbl, 50 to 140 lb/bbl, 70 lb/bbl to 130 lb/bbl, 90 lb/bbl to 125 lb/bbl, or approximately 115 lb/bbl of the brine (water and CaCl_2).

In one or more embodiments, the base fluid comprises an oil to water ratio by volume of 50:50 to 95:05. In further embodiments, the base fluid comprises an oil to water ratio by weight of 50:50 to 80:20, 50:50 to 75:25, 55:45 to 85:15, 60:40 to 85:15, 65:35 to 85:15, 70:30 to 85:15, 60:40 to 80:20, or 65:35 to 75:25. In yet further embodiments, the base fluid comprises an oil to water ratio by volume of 68:32 to 72:28 or approximately 70:30.

The drilling fluid composition may have a weight percent of base fluid of from 1 to 99 wt. %, from 20 wt. % to 80 wt. %, from 30 wt. % to 70 wt. %, from 40 wt. % to 60 wt. %, or from 45 wt. % to 55 wt. % based on the total weight of the drilling fluid composition. Said another way, the drilling fluids may include from 5 lb/bbl to 850 lb/bbl, 100 lb/bbl to 750 lb/bbl, 150 lb/bbl to 600 lb/bbl, or 200 lb/bbl to 300 lb/bbl of base fluid. In embodiments, the drilling fluid composition contains an amount of base fluid, which is dependent on application. For example, the amount of oil or the oil to water ratio depends on the mud weight. For lower mud weight, we use low oil to water ratio. At lower mud weight, the fluid has less solids (weighting material) and hence it needs more water than oil to build up the viscosity.

In further embodiments, additives in the drilling fluid composition may include a weighting material. The weighting material has a specific gravity (SG) suited for raising the drilling fluid composition density. In some embodiments, the weighting material may be a particulate solid having a specific gravity sufficient to increase the density of the drilling fluid composition by a certain amount without adding excessive weighting material such that the drilling fluid composition cannot be circulated through the wellbore. The weighting material may have a specific gravity of from 2 grams per cubic centimeter (g/cm^3) to 6 g/cm^3 . Examples of weighting materials include, but are not limited to, barite (minimum SG of 4.20 grams per cubic centimeter (g/cm^3)), hematite (minimum SG of 5.05 g/cm^3), calcium carbonate (minimum SG of 2.7-2.8 g/cm^3), siderite (minimum SG of 3.8 g/cm^3), ilmenite (minimum SG of 4.6 g/cm^3), other

weighting materials, or any combination of these weighting materials. Some example drilling fluid compositions may include barite as the solid.

The weight percent of the weighting material in the drilling fluid composition may be 1 to 99 wt. %, from 20 wt. % to 80 wt. %, from 30 wt. % to 70 wt. %, from 40 wt. % to 60 wt. %, or from 40 wt. % to 50 wt. % based on the total weight of the drilling fluid composition. Said another way, the drilling fluids may include from 5 lb/bbl to 850 lb/bbl, 100 lb/bbl to 750 lb/bbl, 150 lb/bbl to 500 lb/bbl, or 175 lb/bbl to 275 lb/bbl of weighting material. In embodiments, the drilling fluid composition contains an amount of weighting material sufficient to achieve a particular desired density.

Other additives may be incorporated into the drilling fluid to enhance one or more characteristics of the drilling fluid. Examples of other additives include, but are not limited to, emulsifiers, fluid-loss control additives, alkaline compounds, or combinations of these. The drilling fluid may also include pH adjuster, electrolytes, defoamers, glycerols, dispersion aids, corrosion inhibitors, defoamers, and other additives or combinations of additives.

An additional viscosifier beyond the viscosifier package may be added to the drilling fluid to impart non-Newtonian fluid rheology to the drilling fluid and to facilitate lifting and conveying rock cuttings to the surface of the wellbore. Examples of viscosifiers may include, but are not limited to, xanthan gum polymer (XC polymer), bentonite, polyacrylamide, polyanionic cellulose, or combinations of these viscosifiers. In some embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may include xanthan gum polymer, which is a polysaccharide secreted by the bacteria *Xanthomonas Campestris* (XC). An example drilling fluid composition may include from 0.01 wt. % to 0.1 wt. % of the xanthan gum polymer. In another example drilling fluid composition, bentonite may be added to the drilling fluid in an amount from 0.01 wt. % to 1 wt. %. Other suitable viscosifiers may be used in the drilling fluid without deviating from the scope of the present subject matter.

The drilling fluid composition may optionally include one or more alkaline compounds for pH adjustment, which may include lime (calcium hydroxide or calcium oxide), soda ash (sodium carbonate), sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, other strong bases, or combinations thereof. It is noted that conjugate bases to acids with a pK_a of more than about 13 are considered strong bases. The pH may be maintained within a range in order to minimize corrosion caused by the drilling fluid on steel tubulars, tanks, pumps, and other equipment contacting the drilling fluid. Additionally, the alkaline compounds may react with gases, such as CO_2 or H_2S for example, encountered by the drilling fluid during drilling operations to prevent the gases from hydrolyzing one or more components of the drilling fluid. Some example drilling fluid compositions may optionally include from 0.1 lb/bbl to 10 lb/bbl of alkaline compounds. In some embodiments, the drilling fluid compositions includes from 0.1 lb/bbl to 10 lb/bbl of lime, 0.5 lb/bbl to 5 lb/bbl of lime, or 1 lb/bbl to 2 lb/bbl of lime.

In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may include from 7 lb/bbl to 25 lb/bbl of emulsifier, from 8 lb/bbl to 20 lb/bbl of emulsifier, or from 9 lb/bbl to 15 lb/bbl of emulsifier. In one or more embodiments, the emulsifier may be an invert emulsifier and oil-wetting agent for synthetic based drilling fluid systems such as a carboxylic acid terminated polyamide. A commercially available carboxylic acid terminated polyamide is LE SUPER-MUL™, available from Halliburton Energy Services, Inc.

In one or more embodiments, fluid-loss control additive may be added to the oil-based drilling fluid composition to reduce the amount of filtrate lost from the oil-based drilling fluid composition into a subsurface formation. Examples of fluid-loss control additives include organophilic (for example, amine-treated) lignite, bentonite, manufactured polymers, and thinners or defloculants. The drilling fluid composition may include from 1 lb/bbl to 10 lb/bbl of fluid-loss control additive, from 1 lb/bbl to 5 lb/bbl of fluid-loss control additive, from 1.5 lb/bbl to 8 lb/bbl of fluid-loss control additive, or from 1.5 lb/bbl to 2.5 lb/bbl of fluid-loss control additive.

Commercially available example fluid-loss control additives include VERSATROL™, VERSALIG™, ECOTROL™ RD, ONETROL™ HT, EMI 789, and NOVATECH™ F, all commercially available from MI SWACO, Houston, Tex., and DURATONE® HT (organophilic leonardite fluid loss additive) which is commercially available from Halliburton Energy Services, Inc. In one or more embodiments, the fluid-loss control additive may be a methylstyrene/acrylate copolymer filter control agent such as ADAPTA® which is commercially available from Halliburton Energy Services, Inc.

In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition is substantially free of organoclay. For purposes of this disclosure, substantially free of organoclay means the drilling fluid composition comprises less than 0.01 wt. % organoclay. In embodiments, the drilling fluid composition comprises less than 0.001 wt. % organoclay or less than 0.0001 wt. % organoclay. Organoclays, which are solids, may increase the plastic viscosity of the fluid, which is detrimental for a drilling fluid.

The drilling fluid composition may have a density of from 60 pounds of mass per cubic foot (lbm/ft³) to 155 lbm/ft³, from 60 lbm/ft³ to 130 lbm/ft³, from 60 lbm/ft³ to 120 lbm/ft³, from 70 lbm/ft³ to 140 lbm/ft³, from 70 lbm/ft³ to 125 lbm/ft³, from 70 lbm/ft³ to 110 lbm/ft³, from 80 lbm/ft³ to 120 lbm/ft³, from 80 lbm/ft³ to 110 lbm/ft³, or from 80 lbm/ft³ to 100 lbm/ft³, where 1 lbm/ft³ is approximately 16.02 kilograms per cubic meter (kg/m³). In some embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may have a density that is approximately equal to 90 lbm/ft³ (1,442 kg/m³), alternatively commonly referenced as 90 pcf.

During circulation of the drilling fluid composition through the wellbore, the drilling fluid composition accumulated cuttings and other solids. Additionally, the drilling fluid itself has solids dispersed throughout, such as weighting material. During circulation of the drilling fluid composition the solids are continuously mixed and suspended within the drilling fluid composition. However, when circulation of the drilling fluid composition is interrupted or terminated the solids may settle or separate from the bulk of the drilling fluid composition based on the rheology of the drilling fluid composition. Settling of the cuttings and other solids is undesirable because they would accumulate at the bottom of the wellbore and potentially prevent the drill from rotating or completely block the flow path of the drilling fluid composition upon resumption of drilling activities. In an attempt to avoid setting and separation of solids upon interruption of circulation of the drilling fluid composition, the drilling fluid composition may have a yield point of from 30 pounds of force per 100 square feet (lb/100 ft²) (14.4 Pa) to 100 lb/100 ft² (48 Pa) and a low shear yield point of from 10 lb/100 ft² (4.8 Pa) to 100 lb/100 ft² (48 Pa), where 1 lb/100 ft² is approximately 0.48 Pascal (Pa). The elevated yield point and low shear yield point assists in ensuring the drilling fluid composition gels upon interruption of circula-

tion of the drilling fluid composition and thereby entrains the solids within the gel formation to prevent settling.

The viscosifier package also adjusts the rheology and viscosity of the drilling fluid composition when combined with the base fluid and one or more additives. The addition of the viscosifier package including the polylactic acid or other aliphatic polyester results in increased yield points and gel strength. As previously indicated, the increased viscosity, yield point, and gel strength assists in maintaining suspension of solids and cuttings within the drilling fluid composition both during circulation and when circulation is interrupted.

The viscosity of the drilling fluid composition may be measured using a standard oilfield viscometer according to test methods provided in the American Petroleum Institute (API) Recommended Practice For Field Testing Oil-Based Drilling Fluids (RP 13B-2/ISO 10414-1:2002) published August 2014 and incorporated by reference into this disclosure in its entirety. Drilling fluid is placed in an annular space between two concentric cylinders. The outer cylinder is rotated at a constant rotational velocity which produces a torque on the inner cylinder (or spindle) which is measured. The viscosity is reported as shear stress in units of pounds of force per 100 square feet (lb/100 ft²). The viscometer, which may be a Fann 35 from FANN Instruments, may be used to measure the shear rate of the drilling fluid compositions.

The gel strength refers to the shear stress of the drilling fluid measured at a low shear rate following a defined period of time during which the drilling fluid is maintained in a static state. The shear stress at low shear rate may be measured using a standard oilfield viscometer operated at low rpms, such as at 3 rpm, according to the test methods described in API RP 13B-2. To measure the gel strength, the drilling fluid is first stirred by contacting the drilling fluid with the spindle of the viscometer and operating the viscometer at 600 rotations per minute (rpm) for 10 seconds. The viscometer is then turned off for a period of time (time period). For a 10 second gel strength, the time period is 10 seconds, and for a 10 minute gel strength, the time period is 10 minutes. Other time periods for measuring gel strength are contemplated. During the time period, the drilling fluid comes to rest in a static state. Upon expiration of the time period, the viscometer is turned back on at a low speed, such as 3 rpm, to generate a low shear rate. The viscometer reading is then taken. The gel strength is reported in units of pounds of force per 100 square feet (lb/100 ft²).

The 10 second gel strength provides an indication of the ability of the drilling fluid composition to gel immediately upon termination of drill rotation and circulation of the drilling fluid composition. Quick or near instantaneous gelling of the drilling fluid composition upon termination of circulation helps ensure solids do not settle before gelling. A sufficiently high 10 second gel strength indicates the drilling fluid composition formed a robust gel quickly after removal of agitation. The drilling fluid compositions, may have a 10 second gel strength of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 25 lb/100 ft², from 10 lb/100 ft² to 20 lb/100 ft², from 10 lb/100 ft² to 15 lb/100 ft², from 10 lb/100 ft² to 12 lb/100 ft², from 10.5 lb/100 ft² to 11.5 lb/100 ft², or from 10.8 lb/100 ft² to 11.2 lb/100 ft². In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid compositions may have a 10 second gel strength of approximately 11 lb/100 ft².

Similarly, the 10 minute gel strength provides an indication of the ability of the drilling fluid composition to sustain a gelled configuration for a sustained period after termination of drill rotation and circulation of the drilling fluid

composition. A sufficiently high 10 minute gel strength indicates the drilling fluid composition formed a robust gel which was maintained during periods without agitation. The drilling fluid compositions, may have a 10 minute gel strength of 10 lb/100 ft² to 50 lb/100 ft², from 10 lb/100 ft² to 20 lb/100 ft², from 12 lb/100 ft² to 25 lb/100 ft², from 12 lb/100 ft² to 20 lb/100 ft², from 12 lb/100 ft² to 18 lb/100 ft², from 14 lb/100 ft² to 16 lb/100 ft², or from 14.5 lb/100 ft² to 15.5 lb/100 ft². In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may have a 10 minute gel strength of approximately 15 lb/100 ft².

The drilling fluid composition behaves as a rigid body at low stress, but flows as a viscous fluid at higher shear stress. The rheology of the drilling fluid composition may be modeled based on Bingham plastic flow behavior. Additionally, the rheological behavior of the drilling fluid composition may be determined by measuring the shear stress on the drilling fluid composition at different shear rates, which may be accomplished by measuring the shear stress, the shear rate, or both on the drilling fluid using a viscometer (FANN 35 rheometer) at 3 rpm, 6 rpm, 300 rpm, and 600 rpm. Rheology measurements were done at 120° F. (48.9° C.). The rheology of the drilling fluid composition may be evaluated from the plastic viscosity (PV) and the yield point (YP), which are parameters from the Bingham plastic rheology model. The PV is related to the resistance of the drilling fluid composition to flow due to mechanical interaction between the solids of the drilling fluid composition and represents the viscosity of the drilling fluid composition extrapolated to infinite shear rate. The PV reflects the type and concentration of the solids in the drilling fluid composition, and a lesser PV is preferred. The PV of the drilling fluid composition may be estimated by measuring the shear rate of the drilling fluid composition using the viscometer at spindle speeds of 300 rotations per minute (rpm) and 600 rpm and subtracting the 300 rpm measurement from the 600 rpm measurement according to Equation 1, which is provided infra. The PV is provided in this disclosure in units of centipoise (cP).

$$PV=(600 \text{ rpm reading})-(300 \text{ rpm reading}) \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

The YP represents the shear stress below which the drilling fluid composition behaves as a rigid body and above which the drilling fluid composition flows as a viscous fluid. Specifically, the YP represents the amount of stress required to move the drilling fluid composition from a static condition. The YP is expressed as a force per area, such as pounds of force per one hundred square feet (lb/100 ft²). YP provides an indication of the carrying capacity of the drilling fluid composition for rock cuttings through the annulus, which provides an indication the hole-cleaning ability of the drilling fluid composition. Additionally, frictional pressure loss is directly related to the YP. If you have a higher YP, you will have higher pressure loss while the drilling fluid composition is being circulated. A drilling fluid having a YP of equal to or greater than 15 lb/100 ft² is considered acceptable for drilling and a YP of equal to or greater than 30 lb/100 ft² is considered acceptable for utilization as a packer fluid. The YP is determined by extrapolating the Bingham plastic rheology model to a shear rate of zero. The YP may be estimated from the PV from Equation 1 by subtracting the PV obtained from Equation 1 from the shear rate of the drilling fluid composition measured at 300 rpm according to Equation 2 provided infra.

$$YP=(300 \text{ rpm reading})-PV \quad \text{Equation 2}$$

The yield stress is a parameter obtained from the Herschel Buckley (HB) rheology model. The yield stress may be obtained by fitting the HB model to a shear stress vs. shear rate curve, which is obtained by plotting the dial readings against the corresponding rpm determined on a standard oilfield viscometer. The yield stress indicates the susceptibility of the drilling fluid composition to have barite sag. A high yield stress value is expected to result in a sag resistant drilling fluid composition. The yield stress of the drilling fluid composition may be estimated by calculating the low shear yield point (LSYP). The LSYP is determined by measuring the shear rate of the drilling fluid composition using the viscometer at spindle speeds of 6 rpm and 3 rpm and subtracting the 6 rpm viscometer measurement from twice the 3 rpm viscometer measurement according to Equation 3, which is provided infra.

$$LSYP=[2 \times (3 \text{ rpm reading})]-(6 \text{ rpm reading}) \quad \text{Equation 3}$$

The LSYP is expressed as a force per area, such as pounds of force per one hundred square feet (lb/100 ft²). A drilling fluid having a LSYP of equal to or greater than 5 lb/100 ft² considered acceptable for drilling and a LSYP of equal to or greater than 10 lb/100 ft² is considered acceptable for utilization as a packer fluid.

In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may have a YP of from 30 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft², from 30 lb/100 ft² to 80 lb/100 ft², from 30 lb/100 ft² to 70 lb/100 ft², from 32 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft², from 32 lb/100 ft² to 80 lb/100 ft², from 32 lb/100 ft² to 70 lb/100 ft², from 34 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft², from 34 lb/100 ft² to 80 lb/100 ft², or from 34 lb/100 ft² to 70 lb/100 ft². In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may have a YP of from 30 lb/100 ft² to 60 lb/100 ft². Alternatively, in some embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may have a YP of from 30 lb/100 ft² to 50 lb/100 ft².

In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may have a LSYP of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 40 lb/100 ft², from 10 lb/100 ft² to 30 lb/100 ft², from 10 lb/100 ft² to 20 lb/100 ft², or from 10 lb/100 ft² to 18 lb/100 ft². In one or more embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may have a LSYP of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 25 lb/100 ft². Alternatively, in some embodiments, the drilling fluid composition may have a LSYP of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 15 lb/100 ft².

Drilling fluid compositions containing the viscosifier package may be used in various methods such as methods for drilling subterranean wells. Embodiments of methods for drilling subterranean wells will now be discussed.

The drilling fluid composition that includes the viscosifier package may be used for drilling a subterranean well. According to embodiments, methods of drilling a subterranean well may include operating a drill in a wellbore in the presence of a drilling fluid composition comprising a base fluid, one or more additives including emulsifiers, weighting materials, fluid-loss control additives, or alkaline compounds, and a viscosifier package with a fatty acid having a carbon chain greater than 6 and a polyester chosen from polylactic acid, polyglycolic acid, poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid), polycaprolactone, and polyhydroxybutyrate. The drilling fluid composition has a yield point of from 30 lb/100 ft² (14.4 Pa) to 100 lb/100 ft² (48 Pa) and a low shear yield point of from 10 lb/100 ft² (4.8 Pa) to 40 lb/100 ft² (48 Pa) as determined according to test methods provided in API RP 13B-2 (American Petroleum Institute Recommended Procedure 13B-2). The base fluid may be an invert emulsion

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comprising oil and water. In some example methods, the base fluid is an invert emulsion comprising an oil to water ratio of 50:50 to 95:05.

It will be appreciated that the various embodiments of the drilling fluid composition may be used in the methods of drilling a subterranean well. Additionally, the drilling fluid composition may be circulated through the wellbore during the drilling operation.

EXAMPLES

The following examples illustrate one or more additional features of the present disclosure. It should be understood that these examples are not intended to limit the scope of the disclosure or the appended claims in any manner.

In the following examples, two invert emulsion drilling fluids were prepared containing oil, water, LE SUPERMUL™ (an invert emulsifier and oil-wetting agent for synthetic based drilling fluid systems commercially available from Halliburton Energy Services, Inc.), lime, ADAPTA® (a cross-linked polymer filter control agent commercially available from Halliburton Energy Services, Inc.), starch, lime, calcium chloride, and barite. The first invert emulsion drilling fluid was prepared as a Comparative Example 1 and additionally included a C₁₆-C₁₈ fatty acid. The second invert emulsion drilling fluid was prepared as an Example 1 and additionally included the viscosifier package, namely C₁₆-C₁₈ fatty acid and polyactic acid. The physical characteristics of the two prepared invert emulsion drilling fluids are described in Table 3.

A. Example 1 (Comparative)

Invert Emulsion Drilling Fluid without Viscosifier Package

An invert emulsion drilling fluid without the viscosifier package, but the inclusion of the fatty acid component, was formulated as a control sample for comparison with the drilling fluid composition with the viscosifier package. The formulation of the Example 1 (Comparative) invert emulsion drilling fluid is provided subsequently in Table 1. The components of the invert emulsion drilling fluid were added to a vessel and thoroughly mixed. Specifically, Safra oil and LE SUPERMUL™ were added to a vessel and thoroughly mixed for a period of 5 minutes. Subsequently, lime was added and mixed for 5 minutes. Then C₁₆-C₁₈ fatty acid was added and mixed for 5 minutes. Subsequently, ADAPTA® was added, followed by a 5 minutes mixing period. Then, CaCl₂ and water were added, followed by a 5 minutes mixing period, and finally barite was added, followed by a 5 minutes mixing period. The additives were mixed at room temperature using a high speed multimixer.

TABLE 1

Invert Emulsion Drilling Fluid Formulation for Example 1 (Comparative)	
Ingredient	Example 1 (Comparative) Pounds Per Barrel (lb/bbl)
Safra oil	144.4
LE SUPERMUL™	10
Lime	1.5
C ₁₆ -C ₁₈ fatty acid	4.5
ADAPTA®	2
CaCl ₂	29.5

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TABLE 1-continued

Invert Emulsion Drilling Fluid Formulation for Example 1 (Comparative)	
Ingredient	Example 1 (Comparative) Pounds Per Barrel (lb/bbl)
Water	84.9
Barite	228.9
TOTAL	505.7

B. Example 2

Invert Emulsion Drilling Fluid with Viscosifier Package

An invert emulsion drilling fluid formulation was prepared to include an amount of an viscosifier package according to embodiments of the present disclosure. The viscosifier package comprises C₁₆-C₁₈ fatty acid and polyactic acid in a 1:2 weight ratio. The components of the invert emulsion drilling fluid of Inventive Example 1, including the viscosifier package, were added to a vessel and thoroughly mixed. Specifically, Safra oil and LE SUPERMUL™ were added to a vessel and thoroughly mixed for a period of 5 minutes. Subsequently, lime was added and mixed for 5 minutes followed by the addition of polyactic acid and a 5 minute mixing period. Then C₁₆-C₁₈ fatty acid was added and mixed for 5 minutes. Subsequently, ADAPTA® added followed by a 5 minutes mixing period, CaCl₂ and water were added followed by a 5 minutes mixing period, and finally barite was added followed by a 5 minutes mixing period. The formulation of Example 2 is listed in Table 2 subsequently provided.

TABLE 2

Invert Emulsion Drilling Fluid Formulation for Example 2	
Ingredient	Example 2 Pounds Per Barrel (lb/bbl)
Safra oil	144.4
LE SUPERMUL™	10
Lime	1.5
Viscosifier Package	[4.5]*
C ₁₆ -C ₁₈ fatty acid	1.5
Polyactic Acid	3.0
ADAPTA®	2
CaCl ₂	29.5
Water	84.9
Barite	228.9
TOTAL	505.7

*The brackets "[]" indicate the total lb/bbl for the entire viscosifier package including the C₁₆-C₁₈ fatty acid and the polyactic acid.

The invert emulsion drilling fluids of Example 1 (Comparative) and Example 2 were evaluated for viscosity, gel strength, PV, YP, and LSYF according to the methods previously described in this disclosure. The results of these measurements for the invert emulsion drilling fluids of Example 1 (Comparative) and Example 2 are provided in Table 3. Table 3 also includes a calculated change in the 10 second Gel Strength, 10 Minute Gel Strength, PV, YP, and LSYF of Example 2 compared to Example 1 (Comparative).

TABLE 3

Evaluation of the Properties of the Invert Emulsion Drilling Fluids of Example 1 (Comparative) and Example 2		
	Example 1 (Comparative)	Example 2
600 rpm viscometer reading	65	98
300 rpm viscometer reading	38	66
200 rpm viscometer reading	27	53
100 rpm viscometer reading	18	37
6 rpm viscometer reading	6	12
3 rpm viscometer reading	5	11
10 Second Gel Strength (lb/100 ft ²)	5	11
10 Minute Gel Strength (lb/100 ft ²)	6	15
PV (cP)	27	32
YP (lb/100 ft ²)	11	34
LSYP (lb/100 ft ²)	4	10
Change in 10 Second Gel Strength (%)	—	+120%
Change in 10 Minute Gel Strength (%)	—	+150%
Change in PV (%)	—	+18.5%
Change in YP (%)	—	+209%
Change in LSYP (%)	—	+150%

As shown in Table 3, the drilling fluid of Example 2, which included the viscosifier package, resulted in a 120% increase in the 10 second gel strength and a 150% increase in the 10 minute gel strength of the drilling fluid compared to the drilling fluid of Example 1 (Comparative). Addition of the viscosifier package, as in Example 1, resulted in an increase in the PV of the drilling fluid compared to the drilling fluid of Example 1 (Comparative). The viscosifier package of Example 2 also resulted in a 209% increase in the YP of the drilling fluid composition and a 150% increase in the LSYP of the drilling fluid composition compared to the drilling fluid of Example 1 (Comparative). As it is desirable for a packer fluid to have a YP of at least 30 lb/100 ft² and a LSYP of at least 10 lb/100 ft², the respective 209% and 150% increases in YP and LSYP provides a more desirable drilling fluid composition for use as a packer fluid.

The drilling fluid of Example 2 demonstrated improved rheology over the drilling fluid of Comparative Example 1. Specifically, the 10 second gel strength, the 10 minute gel strength, the PV, the YP, and the LSYP for Example 2 all demonstrated increases over the corresponding measurements of Example 1 (Comparative). As previously indicated, the improvement is attributed to the hydrolysis of the aliphatic polyester into shorter carbon chain units when mixed with the fatty acid to yield the improved rheology. Smaller chain lactic acid and longer chain fatty acid can lead to good packing of the molecules at the oil-water interface in the drilling fluid thereby enhancing the rheology of the fluid.

In a first aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition including a base fluid, a viscosifier package, and one or more additives chosen from an emulsifier, a weighting material, a fluid-loss control additive, or an alkaline compound. The base fluid is an invert emulsion comprising oil and water. The viscosifier package includes a fatty acid having 6 or more carbon atoms and an aliphatic polyester. The drilling fluid composition has a yield point of from 30 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft² measured according to the formula: yield point=[2×(300 rpm shear rate)]−(600 rpm shear rate) and a low shear yield point of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 40 lb/100 ft² measured according to the formula: low shear yield point=[2×(3 rpm shear rate)]−(6 rpm shear rate).

In a second aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of the first aspect, in which a weight ratio of fatty acid to polyester in the viscosifier package is 1:60 to 60:1.

In a third aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of either the first or second aspects, in which a weight ratio of fatty acid to polyester in the viscosifier package is 1:3 to 2:3.

In a fourth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through third aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises from 0.33 lb/bbl to 20 lb/bbl of the viscosifier package.

In a fifth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through fourth aspects, in which the fatty acid is a long chain fatty acid having a carbon chain of 12 to 36 carbons.

In a sixth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through fifth aspects, in which the fatty acid has a carbon chain of 16 to 18 carbons.

In a seventh aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through sixth aspects, in which the aliphatic polyester is chosen from polylactic acid, polyglycolic acid, poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid), polycaprolactone, and polyhydroxybutyrate.

In an eighth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through sixth aspects, in which the polyester comprises polylactic acid.

In a ninth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through eighth aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises less than 0.01 wt. % organoclay.

In a tenth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through ninth aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition has a 10 second gel strength of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 25 lb/100 ft² as determined according to test methods provided in API RP 13B-2.

In an eleventh aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through tenth aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition has a 10 minute gel strength of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 50 lb/100 ft² as determined according to test methods provided in API RP 13B-2.

In a twelfth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through eleventh aspects, in which the base fluid comprises an oil to water ratio of 50:50 to 95:05.

In a thirteenth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through twelfth aspects, in which the water is chosen from fresh water, filtered water, distilled water, sea water, salt water, formation brine, produced water, or combinations thereof.

In a fourteenth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through thirteenth aspects, in which the oil is a natural oil.

In a fifteenth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through thirteenth aspects, in which the oil is a synthetic oil.

In a sixteenth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through fifteenth aspects, in which the one or more additives comprises a weighting material.

In a seventeenth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through sixteenth aspects, in which the weighting material is chosen from at least one of barite, calcium carbonate, hematite, siderite, or ilmenite.

In an eighteenth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through seventeenth

aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises from 5 lb/bbl to 850 lb/bbl base fluid.

In a nineteenth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through eighteenth aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises from 5 lb/bbl to 850 lb/bbl weighting material.

In a twentieth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through nineteenth aspects, in which the fatty acid is a saturated fatty acid.

In a twenty-first aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through twentieth aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises from 0.5 lb/bbl to 10 lb/bbl of the lime.

In a twenty-second aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through twenty-first aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises from 7 lb/bbl to 25 lb/bbl of the emulsifier.

In a twenty-third aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through twenty-second aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises from 30 lb/bbl to 150 lb/bbl of the brine.

In a twenty-fourth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through twenty-third aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises from 1 lb/bbl to 10 lb/bbl of the fluid-loss control additive.

In a twenty-fifth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through twenty-fourth aspects, in which the drilling fluid composition comprises from 3 lb/bbl to 10 lb/bbl of the viscosifier package.

In a twenty-sixth aspect, the disclosure provides a drilling fluid composition of any of the first through twenty-fifth aspects, in which the base fluid is an invert emulsion comprising oil and a CaCl_2 brine.

In a twenty-seventh aspect, the disclosure provides a method of drilling a subterranean well. The method includes operating a drill in a wellbore in the presence of the drilling fluid composition of any of the first through twenty-sixth aspects.

It should be understood that any two quantitative values assigned to a property may constitute a range of that property, and all combinations of ranges formed from all stated quantitative values of a given property are contemplated in this disclosure. It should be appreciated that compositional ranges of a chemical constituent in a composition or formulation should be appreciated as containing, in some embodiments, a mixture of isomers of that constituent. It should be appreciated that the examples supply compositional ranges for various compositions, and that the total amount of isomers of a particular chemical composition can constitute a range.

Having described the subject matter of the present disclosure in detail and by reference to specific embodiments, it is noted that the various details described in this disclosure should not be taken to imply that these details relate to elements that are essential components of the various embodiments described in this disclosure, even in cases where a particular element is illustrated in each of the drawings that accompany the present description. Rather, the claims appended hereto should be taken as the sole representation of the breadth of the present disclosure and the corresponding scope of the various embodiments described in this disclosure. Further, it should be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made to the described embodiments without departing from the spirit and scope of the claimed subject matter. Thus it is intended that the specification cover the modifications and variations of the various described

embodiments provided such modification and variations come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. A drilling fluid composition comprising:
 - a base fluid, where the base fluid is an invert emulsion comprising oil and water;
 - one or more additives chosen from an emulsifier, a weighting material, a fluid-loss control additive, or an alkaline compound; and
 - a viscosifier package, the viscosifier package comprising:
 - a fatty acid having 6 or more carbon atoms; and
 - an aliphatic polyester,
 the drilling fluid composition having a yield point of from 30 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft² measured according to API recommended practice 13-B2 in accordance with:

$$\text{yield point} = [2 \times (300 \text{ rpm reading})] - (600 \text{ rpm reading})$$

and a low shear yield point of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 40 lb/100 ft² measured in accordance with:

$$\text{low shear yield point} = [2 \times (3 \text{ rpm reading})] - (6 \text{ rpm reading})$$

where the drilling fluid composition comprises from 0.33 lb/bbl to 20 lb/bbl of the viscosifier package.

2. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where a weight ratio of fatty acid to polyester in the viscosifier package is 1:60 to 60:1.

3. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where a weight ratio of fatty acid to polyester in the viscosifier package is 1:3 to 2:3.

4. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where the fatty acid is a long chain fatty acid having a carbon chain of 12 to 36 carbons.

5. The drilling fluid composition claim 1 where the fatty acid has a carbon chain of 16 to 18 carbons.

6. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where the aliphatic polyester is chosen from polylactic acid, polyglycolic acid, poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid), polycaprolactone, and polyhydroxybutyrate.

7. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where the polyester comprises polylactic acid.

8. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where the drilling fluid composition comprises less than 0.01 wt. % organoclay.

9. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where the drilling fluid composition has a 10 second gel strength of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 25 lb/100 ft² as determined according to test methods provided in API RP 13B-2.

10. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where the drilling fluid composition has a 10 minute gel strength of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 50 lb/100 ft² as determined according to test methods provided in API RP 13B-2.

11. The drilling fluid composition of claim 1 where the fatty acid is a saturated fatty acid.

12. A method of drilling a subterranean well, the method comprising:
 - operating a drill in a wellbore in the presence of a drilling fluid composition comprising:
 - a base fluid, where the base fluid is an invert emulsion comprising oil and water;
 - one or more additives chosen from an emulsifier, a weighting material, a fluid-loss control additive, or an alkaline compound; and

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a viscosifier package, the viscosifier package comprising:
 a fatty acid having 6 or more carbon atoms; and
 an aliphatic polyester,
 the drilling fluid composition having a yield point of from 30 5
 lb/100 ft² to 100 lb/100 ft² measured according to API
 recommended practice 13-B2 in accordance with:

$$\text{yield point}=[2 \times (300 \text{ rpm reading})] - (600 \text{ rpm reading})$$

and a low shear yield point of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 40
 lb/100 ft² measured in accordance with:

$$\text{low shear yield point}=[2 \times (3 \text{ rpm reading})] - (6 \text{ rpm reading})$$

where the drilling fluid composition comprises from 0.33
 lb/bbl to 20 lb/bbl of the viscosifier package.

13. The method of drilling a subterranean well of claim 12
 where a weight ratio of fatty acid to polyester in the
 viscosifier package is 1:60 to 60:1.

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14. The method of drilling a subterranean well of claim 12
 where the drilling fluid composition comprises from 0.33 to
 10 lb/bbl of the viscosifier package.

15. The method of drilling a subterranean well of claim 12
 where the fatty acid is a long chain fatty acid having a carbon
 chain of 12 to 36 carbons.

16. The method of drilling a subterranean well of claim 12
 where the fatty acid has a carbon chain of 16 to 18 carbons.

17. The method of drilling a subterranean well of claim 12
 where the aliphatic polyester is chosen from polylactic acid,
 polyglycolic acid, poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid), polycaprolactone,
 and polyhydroxybutyrate.

18. The method of drilling a subterranean well of claim 12
 where the drilling fluid composition has a 10 second gel
 strength of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 25 lb/100 ft² as determined
 according to test methods provided in API RP 13B-2.

19. The method of drilling a subterranean well of claim 12
 where the drilling fluid composition has a 10 minute gel
 strength of from 10 lb/100 ft² to 50 lb/100 ft² as determined
 according to test methods provided in API RP 13B-2.

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