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Through President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, 24 States Set to Begin Plugging Over 10,000 Orphaned Wells

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08/25/2022

Last edited 02/07/2024

Date: Thursday, August 25, 2022

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

WASHINGTON — The Department of the Interior today announced it has awarded an initial \$560 million from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to 24 states to begin work to plug, cap and reclaim orphaned oil and gas wells. Millions of Americans across the country live within a mile of an orphaned oil and gas well. [Eligible states](#) have indicated that there are over 10,000 high-priority well sites across the country ready for immediate remediation efforts, with many more lined up for future action.

Orphaned oil and gas wells are polluting backyards, recreation areas, and community spaces across the country. Methane leaking from many of these unplugged wells is a serious safety hazard and is a significant cause of climate change, being more than 25 times as potent as carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. The historic investments to clean up these hazardous sites will create good-paying union jobs, catalyze economic growth and revitalization, and reduce harmful methane leaks.

“President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is enabling us to confront long-standing environmental injustices by making a historic investment to plug orphaned wells throughout the country,” said **Secretary Deb Haaland**. “At the Department of the Interior, we are working on multiple fronts to clean up these sites as quickly as we can by investing in efforts on federal lands and partnering with states and Tribes to leave no community behind. Today's announcement is exciting progress toward what we will accomplish together through this historic Law.”

The announcement comes as Secretary Haaland, Director of the National Economic Council Brian Deese, Deputy White House National Climate Advisor Ali Zaidi, Deputy Secretary of Energy David Turk, and members of the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic

Revitalization were in New Mexico highlighting how historic investments from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act will address legacy pollution and help transition energy communities through good paying jobs and economic revitalization.

Plugging orphaned wells will help advance the goals of the [U.S. Methane Emissions Reduction Action Plan](#), as well as the [Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization](#), which focuses on spurring economic revitalization in hard-hit energy communities.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law delivers the largest investment in tackling legacy pollution in American history, including through a \$4.7 billion investment to plug orphaned wells. These legacy pollution sites are environmental hazards and jeopardize public health and safety by contaminating groundwater, emitting noxious gases and methane, littering the landscape with rusted and dangerous equipment, and harming wildlife.

Of initial state plans:

- 15 states will utilize Initial Grant funding to set up methane measuring capacity while 6 states -- including California, Mississippi and West Virginia -- have committed to measuring methane before and immediately after remediation
- 12 states -- including Kansas, New Mexico and Ohio -- have prioritized capping wells in disadvantaged communities
- Several states -- including Arizona, Louisiana and Montana -- will prioritize job creation and preference to small businesses through their contracting process

As of 2021, states have identified more than 129,000 orphaned wells on state and private land, though this number will grow as Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding becomes available for further records research, more field equipment, improved well location techniques, and increased site inspections and data collection nationwide.

Today's investment is part of an overall \$1.15 billion in Phase One funding announced in January by the Department for states to plug and remediate orphaned wells. States will receive additional formula funding dollars in the coming months. In addition, an initial \$33 million was recently allocated to plug 277 wells on [federal public lands](#). The Tribal orphaned well grant program is being informed by ongoing Tribal consultations and listening sessions.

Of states eligible for funding, 22 have been allocated \$25 million each in Initial State Grants. Arkansas and Mississippi will receive \$5 million each to support methane measurement and begin plugging wells.

The below list reflects the number of wells identified for plugging and remediation with Initial Grant Funding by each eligible state. The number of wells varies based on the remoteness, well depth, site conditions and previous activity at the well site as well as other state considerations, such as the number of existing staff and whether the state has preexisting well plugging contracts.

State

of wells

Alaska	12-18
Arizona	246
Arkansas	227
California	171
Colorado	140
Florida	36-48
Illinois	600-800
Indiana	400
Kansas	2,352
Kentucky	1,000-1,200
Louisiana	250 – 900
Michigan	447
Mississippi	*
Montana	254
Nebraska	225
New Mexico	200
New York	167
North Dakota	120
Ohio	245
Oklahoma	1,196
Pennsylvania	50
Texas	800

*Mississippi will create a comprehensive inventory of orphaned wells statewide, purchase equipment needed to perform field inspections, and develop contracts for methane measurement, remediation of contaminated media, and well plugging.

**Wyoming plans to plug, remediate and reclaim as many documented orphaned wells as possible, to complete remediation or reclamation actions where such work was not completed after plugging, and to locate and characterize undocumented orphaned wells. Wyoming estimates that there could be up to 300 jobs created or saved utilizing this program.

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