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President's Investing in America Agenda Provides Resources for Tribal Nations to Address Legacy Pollution



Investment of \$40 million from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will help Tribes clean up orphaned oil and gas wells, combat climate change

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WASHINGTON — The Department of the Interior today announced nearly \$40 million in a first phase of funding through President Biden's Investing in America agenda to help Tribal communities plug and remediate orphaned oil and gas wells across Indian Country. This investment is a critical step in supporting Tribal land rights and economic opportunities to address legacy pollution, reduce harmful methane leaks, and tackle environmental hazards that threaten Tribal communities.

President Biden's Investing in America agenda, a key pillar of the Bidenomics strategy, is deploying [record investments](#) to provide affordable high-speed internet, safer roads and bridges, modern wastewater and sanitation systems, clean drinking water, reliable and affordable electricity, and good paying jobs in every Tribal community. Today's announcement is part of an overall \$150 million investment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in Tribal Nations' capacity to catalyze economic growth and revitalization, improve public safety, and reduce harmful methane leaks.

"Indigenous communities have long been disproportionately burdened by environmental pollution," said **Secretary Deb Haaland**. "Through President Biden's Investing in America agenda, we are investing in Indian Country. The Department is committed to improving safety and health conditions for Indian Country, honoring Tribal sovereignty, and supporting sustainable development and good-paying jobs. We are doing this by working with Tribes every step of the way, because we know Tribal leaders know best how to care for their people."

"The Biden-Harris administration is committed to living up to our promises to Indian Country," said **Assistant Secretary Newland**. "As we steward these investments, we are working directly with

Tribes every step of the way to ensure that their voices are integrated into decision-making processes. This is a key component of the President’s Investing in America agenda –building out the infrastructure to equip Tribes now and into the future.”

This first phase of funding will provide more than \$34 million in Implementation Grants to Tribal Nations to support plugging, remediation and reclamation activities for orphaned wells on Tribal lands. Other funded activities under this type of grant include: pre-plugging assessments and remediation of soil and restoration of habitat degraded by orphaned wells or associated pipelines, facilities, and infrastructure on Tribal lands.

In addition, more than \$4.9 million of funding will be awarded for Program Development Grants that support capacity-building activities and help Tribal recipients prepare for future plugging, remediation and reclamation activities as outlined in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This type of grant funding will assist Tribes in locating, inventorying and assessing orphaned wells and in amplifying Tribal capacity and expertise through job creation, training and administrative support.

Phase 1 Tribal Orphaned Wells Grant Awards

Tribe or Nation	Estimated Wells Assessed*	Estimated Wells Plugged**	Grant Award Amount
Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation	117	7	\$2,344,014
The Chickasaw Nation	5	-	\$86,253
Chippewa Cree Indians of the Rocky Boy's Reservation	155		\$1,000,000
Fort Belknap Indian Community of the Fort Belknap Reservation of Montana	66	-	\$1,000,000
Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma	-	48	\$4,735,765
The Muscogee (Creek) Nation	166	-	\$997,662
Navajo Nation	-	21	\$4,976,586
Osage Nation		290	\$19,100,414
Otoe-Missouria Tribe of Indians	-	48	\$4,642,620

Southern Ute Indian Tribe	50	-	\$497,850
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Total	559	414	\$39,381,164
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*Assessed = Pre-plugging activities such as discovery, identification, inventory, and assessment

**Plugged = Well will be plugged to relevant applicable standard

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law also funds requests from Tribal Nations for “in lieu of grant” assistance in plugging, remediating and reclaiming orphaned wells on Tribal lands. In this first phase of funding, in response to a request from the Crow Tribe, the Department’s Indian Energy Service Center will administer a contract to plug, remediate and reclaim eleven orphaned wells on the Tribe’s land.

In the coming months, the Department will share information for the next phase of funding opportunities for Tribes to request financial and technical support under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to address orphaned wells on Tribal lands.

These legacy pollution sites are environmental hazards and jeopardize public health and safety by contaminating groundwater, littering the landscape with rusted and dangerous equipment and harming wildlife. 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. Plugging orphaned wells will help advance the goals of the [U.S. Methane Emissions Reduction Action Plan](#).

The funding announced today is in addition to \$560 million in [orphaned well grant funding](#) that was provided to states in August 2022, and nearly \$100 million in funding that is going towards addressing orphaned wells on public lands and waters.

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