



ORPHAN WELLS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is an orphan well?

An orphan well is an oil/gas or injection well that has no responsive operator that can be held accountable for maintaining or plugging it.



How many orphan wells currently exist in Louisiana?

Louisiana has approximately 6,000 orphan wells.



What is the difference between an orphan well and an inactive well?

- **Orphan well:** A well without responsive operator – may have gone out of business or it may be the result of regulatory action in response to noncompliance.
- **Inactive well:** Not producing oil or gas but still has a responsive operator, for example, wells that have been shut in awaiting maintenance.
 - The longer a well remains inactive/shut-in, the more likely it is to eventually be orphaned when the operator can no longer maintain its sites.



Why do wells become “orphaned”?

Wells typically become orphaned when:

- The operating company goes bankrupt or dissolves.
- The operator is not complying with C&E regulations and other means to gain compliance have been exhausted.



Who pays to plug orphan wells?

The Oilfield Site Restoration Fund is funded by fees paid by operators per barrel of oil or thousand cubic feet of natural gas, and a fee paid by operators for long-term inactive wells.



Does the state take ownership of orphan wells?

No. The state does not assume ownership of the well or the land. The state’s role is strictly closing out the site.



Are private landowners responsible for the site restoration of orphan wellsites located on their property?

The owner of the property on which an orphaned site is located is not responsible for site restoration.



Can private landowners or developers restore orphan wellsites located on their property?

A landowner or developer may elect to restore an orphaned wellsite at their own expense by entering into a Cooperative Agreement with C&E. Landowner must still obtain work permits from C&E.