

**IDLE AND ORPHAN OIL AND GAS WELLS:
State and Provincial Regulatory Strategies
Supplemental Information**



2020

ABOUT IOGCC

The Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC) is a multi-state government agency that promotes the conservation and efficient recovery of domestic oil and natural gas resources while protecting health, safety, and the environment. The IOGCC provides member states and international affiliates with a clear and unified voice and serves as a primary authority on issues surrounding these vital resources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IOGCC compiled this supplementary report to satisfy an urgent request for information on a topic of paramount importance to the organization and its constituents. The states made this report possible by responding within a week's time to our request for information. We extend our sincere thanks for their assistance.

DISCLAIMER

The states have provided data and other information for this report. The authors and editors have attempted to summarize this information in an accurate and meaningful way.

Should you have a question about the contents of this report, please feel free to contact IOGCC for assistance. Please note, however, that a question regarding information from a specific state may be referred to sources within the state.

METHODOLOGY

This report supplements the information published in the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission's 2019 report titled "Idle and Orphan Oil and Gas Wells: State and Provincial Regulatory Strategies." It is based on survey responses from 30 IOGCC member states and provides additional information on the documented orphan wells reported by the states for the 2019 report.

Orphan wells are idle wells for which the operator is unknown or insolvent. Most states and provinces have inventories of documented orphan wells. For the 2019 report, which used 2018 data, states and provinces reported from zero to 13,266 documented orphan wells, with about half having fewer than 100.

The supplemental information in this report categorizes the population of documented orphan wells by land ownership. The states were asked to specify how many of the documented orphan wells occur on state lands, private lands, and federal/tribal lands.

The survey of states for this supplementary report sought information on the documented orphan wells as of 2018. It also asked the states to provide 2019 data on documented orphan wells if readily available. The request was limited to readily available data for 2019 because of the short time given for response.

RESULTS

A large majority of the documented orphan wells occur on private lands. Lesser numbers occur on state lands or federal/tribal lands.

All states cover wells on private and state lands in their documented orphan well counts. They do not all cover wells on federal/tribal lands in their counts of documented orphan wells.

Some states do not track wells on federal lands at all or do so only incidentally, as for example when addressing the wells owned by an operator in bankruptcy. Other states track all documented orphan wells without regard to land ownership.

For 2018, in the 26 states that could categorize wells based on land ownership, 92 percent of the documented orphan wells were on private land, five percent on state land, and three percent on federal/tribal land. Of those 26 states, 23 states provided 2019 data categorized by land ownership. There were no significant changes in the percentages between 2018 and 2019.

In the 24 states that provided data for both years, the total number of documented orphan wells rose by 4,879 wells, or 13 percent, from 2018 to 2019. The increase was primarily due to California's recent efforts to document its orphan wells.

See **Table S1** for the detailed data reported by the states.

Table S1. Documented orphan wells: all surveyed states (2018, 2019)

| State | Documented Orphan Wells (2018) | State Land (2018) | Private Land (2018) | Federal/Tribal (2018) | Documented Orphan Wells (2019) | State Land (2019) | Private Land (2019) | Federal/Tribal (2019) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Alabama | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Alaska | 15 | 11 | 1 | 3 | 15 | 11 | 1 | 3 |
| Arizona | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Arkansas | 484 | 0 | 484 | 0 | 430 | 0 | 430 | 0 |
| California | 16 | NA | NA | NA | 4,844 | NA | NA | NA |
| Colorado | 275 | 8 | 241 | 26 | 288 | 8 | 254 | 26 |
| Idaho | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Illinois | 4,253 | <213 | >4,040 | 0 | 4,239 | <212 | >4,027 | 0 |
| Indiana | 1,028 | 21 | 1,006 | 1 | 1,107 | 21 | 1,085 | 1 |
| Kansas | 5,709 | 0 | 5,709 | 0 | 5,653 | 0 | 5,653 | 0 |
| Kentucky | 13,266 | <100 | >13,066 | <100 | | | | |
| Louisiana | 3,966 | 247 | 3,719 | 0 | | | | |
| Maryland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Michigan | 98 | 1 | 96 | 1 | 116 | 1 | 114 | 1 |
| Mississippi | 18 | 1 | 16 | 1 | 18 | 1 | 16 | 1 |
| Montana | 231 | 23 | 208 | 0 | 232 | 19 | 213 | 0 |
| Nebraska | 75 | 9 | 64 | 2 | 98 | 9 | 87 | 2 |
| Nevada | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| New Mexico ¹ | 115/374 | 76 | 82 | 216 | 708 | 106 | 213 | 389 |
| New York | 2,000 | 19 | 1,976 | 5 | 2,400 | 19 | 2,376 | 5 |
| North Dakota ² | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ohio | 910 | NA | NA | NA | | | | |
| Oklahoma | 1,372 | NA | NA | NA | 1,075 | 22 | 1,053 | 0 |
| Pennsylvania | 8,703 | 592 | 6,811 | 1,300 | 8,638 | 588 | 6,760 | 1,290 |
| South Dakota | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Texas | 6,285 | 301 | 5,930 | 54 | 6,208 | 143 | 6,012 | 53 |
| Utah | 33 | 4 | 29 | 0 | 47 | 10 | 37 | 0 |
| Virginia | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| West Virginia | 4,646 | 813 | 3,773 | 60 | 4,555 | 795 | 3,700 | 60 |
| Wyoming | 3,083 | NA | NA | 0 | 2,906 | 193 | 2,713 | 0 |
| Total³ | 56,600/56,859 | | | | | | | |

NA = The state reported that the data is not available. Blank cell = The state did not report or explain.

¹ New Mexico revised its 2018 number for documented orphan wells after the original report was published from 115 to 374.

² North Dakota had no orphan wells in 2018/2019. In 2020, 366 wells have been orphaned (16 on state lands, 333 on private lands, and 17 on federal/tribal lands).

³ The total for 2018 shows the change related to New Mexico's revision. Missing data prevents the totaling of other columns.