

Past:
A Legacy of Pollution

Future:
A Legacy of Environmental
Stewardship

**Orphaned Wells Program Office
Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
Fiscal Years 2025-2030**

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



As the Director of the newly established Orphaned Wells Program Office (OWPO), I am in a unique position. I have the privilege of leading the creation of an organization as it grows to improve the health of both our nation's environment and the communities impacted by a legacy of pollution.

With the enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (PL-117-58), Title VI, "Methane Reduction Infrastructure," Section 40601 in November 2021, the seed for what has become the OWPO was planted through the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance. With the signing of Secretary's Order 3409 on January 10, 2023, the OWPO was formally created, and we officially began working to achieve our vision of transforming a legacy of pollution into a legacy of environmental stewardship.

In just over a year and half, thanks to the hard work of a very dedicated staff, we established our mission, vision, and values, which represent the roots of the OWPO. This year, we leaped to new heights, reaching a milestone of over \$1 billion in financial assistance disbursed to states, Tribes, and federal partners to support orphaned well clean-up efforts.

As illustrated throughout this document, we see the power and endurance of a mighty oak tree as representing the fulfillment of OWPO's mission to transform a legacy of pollution into a legacy of environmental stewardship. The infusion of BIL funds provides states, Tribes, and our federal partners with the financial resources necessary to protect groundwater, restore impacted lands, and combat climate change through the BIL's once-in-a generation investment in orphaned well clean-up efforts.

To protect communities in perpetuity, BIL-funded well-plugging work that prevents methane and other pollutants from leaking into the air and groundwater must endure and stand the test of time. And just as an oak tree will flourish and strengthen as it interacts and communicates with its surrounding species, the OWPO must meaningfully engage with our stakeholders to successfully implement the Program.

Through the path established in this Strategic Plan, we will nurture the seed that was planted into a strong organization that positively impacts our nation's communities, environment, and economy. Accomplishing the goals and objectives facilitates growth while our organizational values and program priorities keep us grounded in strong roots. With the support of our valued partners and the orphaned wells community at large, we will succeed in creating a legacy of environmental stewardship.

Sincerely,
Kimbra Davis
Director, Orphaned Wells Program Office

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Orphaned Wells Program Office is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Office of the Secretary. It has primary responsibility for the administration of \$4.677 billion in funding to plug, remediate, and reclaim orphaned oil and gas wells on federal, state, Tribal, and private lands. The OWPO works cooperatively with the Interior Business Center (IBC) and the Office of the Solicitor (SOL) to implement those grant programs. Multiple other bureaus and offices within DOI provide guidance on contracting, grants management, fund controls, formulas for funding distribution, performance management, and financial reporting.

The Orphaned Wells Program aligns all work done with the BIL established priorities to:

- Invest public dollars efficiently, avoid waste, and focus on measurable outcomes for the American people;
- Increase the competitiveness of the economy, including through implementing the Act’s Build America Buy America requirements and bolstering U.S. manufacturing and supply chains;
- Improve job opportunities for millions of Americans by focusing on high labor standards for these jobs, including prevailing wages and the free and fair chance to join a union;
- Invest public dollars equitably, including through the Justice40 Initiative, which is a government-wide effort toward a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits from certain federal investments in climate and clean energy flow to disadvantaged communities;
- Help combat the crisis of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Effectively coordinate with state, local, Tribal, and territorial governments in implementing these critical investments.

Key Indicators of Success		
Long-term indicators the OWPO was successful administering the BIL funding		
Did OWPO:		
1) help develop and advance orphaned well-related tools and technologies available to the broader orphaned wells community to improve practices for remediating orphaned wells?	2) harness the scientific expertise within DOI and other federal agencies in ways that help maximize the value of the BIL’s investment in orphaned well plugging, remediation, and restoration?	3) effectively communicate to the public the story of orphaned wells, including the causes, impacts, and solutions to the American public and successfully link the historic funding with the enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law?

The strategic elements outlined in this plan serve to clarify how OWPO can best serve the orphaned wells community, including Tribal Nations, states, federal partners – Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), and the US Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service, Congress, the public, environmental groups, the private sector, scientific communities, academia, unions, and the global workforce. The OWPO strives to serve this community and ensure its success in eliminating the legacy of pollution caused by orphaned wells.

Before & After of a Wellsite on Private Land¹



Millions of Americans across the country live within just one mile of an orphaned oil and gas well. These legacy pollution sites are environmental hazards and jeopardize public health and safety by contaminating surface water and groundwater, emitting noxious gases like methane, littering the landscape with rusted and dangerous equipment, and harming wildlife. This house in Kentucky is just one example of how an orphaned well can greatly impact Americans.

OWPO ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

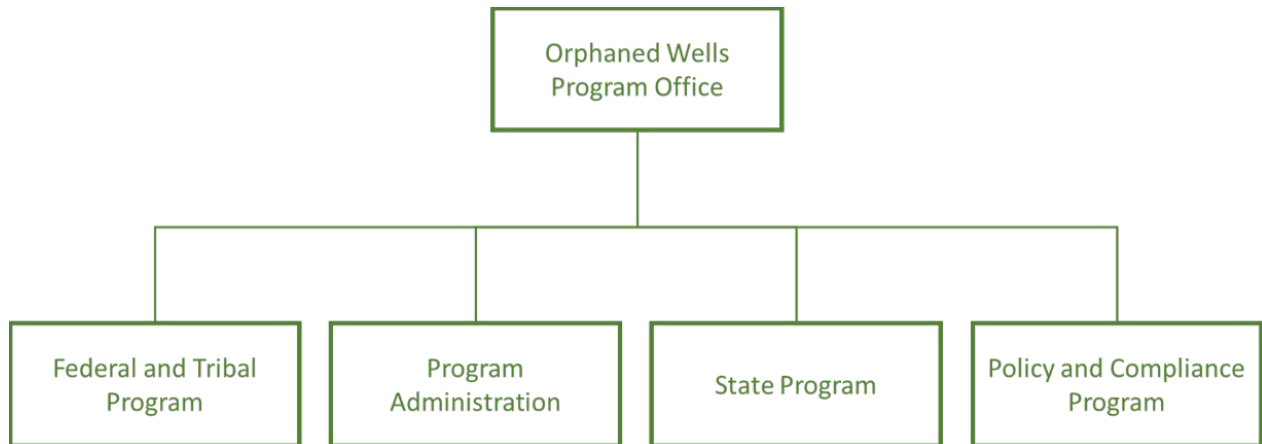
In addition to the Director's office, OWPO has four main functional areas:

- The Federal and Tribal Program Division is responsible for overseeing \$250 million² in funding to plug, remediate, and reclaim orphaned wells located on federally managed land and waters; developing and administering \$150 million in financial assistance programs for eligible Tribes to identify, plug, remediate, and restore orphaned wells and well sites on federally recognized Tribal lands; and ensuring that projects adhere to established guidelines, policies, and requirements.
- The Program Administration Division is responsible for planning, reporting, and managing administrative functions. This includes budgeting, strategic planning, performance management, reporting, information management and technology, records management, privacy, documenting business processes and controls, data management, and preparing guidance for Bureaus and Offices. This division also conducts program evaluations and identifies and facilitates opportunities for collaboration and coordination across programs and offices.
- The State Program Division is responsible for developing and administering \$4.275 billion in financial assistance programs for eligible States to identify, plug, remediate, and restore orphaned wells and well sites on State and private lands, and ensuring that projects adhere to established guidelines, policies, and requirements.
- The Policy and Compliance Program Division is responsible for ensuring that the protection of natural, historical, and cultural resources is fully considered, and that

¹ Photos provided by the Kentucky Division of Oil and Gas within the KY Energy and Environment Cabinet

² The amount shown for the Federal and Tribal Program Division and the State Program Division, above, include 3.5 percent that is authorized for oversight and administration of the Federal, Tribal and State programs.

programmatic compliance requirements are coordinated effectively and documented across the orphaned wells programs and throughout the financial assistance lifecycle. This division also develops grant guidance and programmatic policy and ensures participants comply with the terms and conditions of the award and applicable jurisdictional requirements.



VISION STATEMENT

Transform a legacy of environmental pollution into a legacy of environmental stewardship by serving as a collaborative and empowering resource for states, Tribes, federal agencies, and the broader orphaned wells community, working to identify, plug, remediate, and restore orphaned oil and gas wells and well sites.



MISSION STATEMENT

Fulfill the orphaned wells requirements of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and *Secretary’s Order 3409* by facilitating the effective, accountable, and efficient implementation of the state, Tribal, and federal assistance programs to reduce methane emissions, prevent groundwater and surface water contamination, eliminate health and safety hazards, create good paying jobs, and benefit historically disadvantaged communities.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

As individuals and as an organization, we act with **integrity**, hold ourselves and our colleagues **accountable**, engage in **thoughtful communication**, and approach all interactions from a place of **mutual respect**.

- When we act with integrity, we communicate honestly, promote transparency in decision-making, and hold ourselves to the highest standards of ethical conduct.
- When we hold ourselves and our colleagues accountable, we take responsibility for our words and actions, and serve as dedicated public servants and dependable members of the team.
- We engage in thoughtful communication by listening to hear and understand, valuing collaboration and teamwork, and relying on scientifically and analytically well-reasoned decisions to move our organization forward.
- We approach all interactions from a place of mutual respect by displaying kindness and compassion, communicating with professionalism, embracing diversity, and creating an accessible and inclusive workplace.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The OWPO's Strategic Goals provide the managerial and organizational framework necessary to translate the OWPO mission and vision into an implementable and measurable set of objectives. These actions, as outlined, ensure OWPO will create a legacy of environmental stewardship. The objectives provide a direct path for actionable tasks obtainable in achievable timeframes. Each objective and task are aligned with a Division in OWPO for completion. Performance measures and milestones derive from the objectives and assigned tasks to create a fully monitored program.

Goal 1. Build a Valued Workplace

Build a proactive and successful program by attracting and cultivating an agile and talented workforce and creating a positive and rewarding working environment.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.1. Provide employees with opportunities for meaningful engagement. To support a dispersed, hybrid organization, continue a commitment to OWPO's annual all-employee summit, annual division meetings, and bi-annual leadership meetings; support meaningful interaction through ad-hoc employee working groups focusing on specific objectives; and utilize detailees to foster relationships across DOI.
- 1.2. Develop a flexible workplace and workforce. Cultivate a diverse and well-trained staff located throughout the country to support our nationwide program. Fully staff an organization with the ability to develop and support the needs of the program

throughout its lifecycle. Ensure the right mix of valuable staff are hired and trained to address the varied needs of the program.

- 1.3. Provide opportunities for employee recognition. Develop an employee recognition and award program to highlight achievements at all levels. Utilize all existing options for formal recognition as well as cultivate informal appreciation opportunities to foster a culture of employee satisfaction.

Goal 2. Effective Award Processing and Monitoring

Support our recipients through a comprehensive technical programmatic process to monitor awards to state, Tribal, and federal partners that allows for the identification and plugging of orphaned wells and reclamation of well-sites that ensures compliance with applicable state, Tribal, and federal laws and regulations.

OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. Meet established timelines for developing and publishing guidance for all remaining grant opportunities, including all Formula Grant Phases, and Matching, Regulatory Improvement, and Tribal grants.
- 2.2. Monitor technical and programmatic processes for all stages of award. Collaborate with award recipients and internal stakeholders including IBC, SOL, IESC, BIL PMO, and others to ensure adherence to laws and grant requirements.
- 2.3. Build effective, efficient, and collaborative partnerships with states, Tribes, and federal recipients to ensure compliance and reporting requirements are met.
- 2.4. Develop, implement, and maintain necessary financial management controls to support program objectives. Ensure adequate funding is available in accordance with published guidance to support award processing.
- 2.5. Provide support to award recipients navigating and meeting environmental laws and regulations.
- 2.6. Actively ensure compliance and monitor performance through reviews and inspections.

Goal 3. Optimize Data-driven Opportunities

Establish and implement systems, processes, and data governance to provide a foundation for the use of data for operational and monitoring purposes and for demonstrating the effectiveness of the program. Use data, both qualitative and quantitative, to share the successes and impacts of well-plugging.

OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. Implement the OWPO Data Strategic Plan, including the four goals³:
 - Strengthen data governance.
 - Facilitate agency collaboration, data access, sharing, and integration.
 - Enhance decision-making.
 - Harness data to communicate program impact.

- 3.2. Develop and maintain a national inventory of plugged orphaned wells including data on plugging costs, methane emissions, groundwater and surface water contamination, and community impacts.

- 3.3. Tell our story. Strategically use the valuable data gathered, both quantitative and qualitative, to share the success of the program and demonstrate the impact of the historic investment and the work accomplished. Stories can be shared as Geonarratives, as a part of our reporting process in annual publications, press releases and conference presentations. Use these stories to enhance our web presence and further awareness of program success.

Goal 4. Build and Leverage Partnerships

Develop and foster operational and strategic alliances across the orphaned wells community. These alliances, both formal and informal, help to accomplish common goals and initiatives, bolster program success, and act as force multipliers.

OBJECTIVES

- 4.1. Utilize and strengthen operational partnerships. OWPO has several projects with operational partners aimed at completing aspects of the mission. Partnerships include IBC, United States Geological Survey, Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission, Energy Community Revitalization Program Technical Working Group, and Indian Energy Services Center (IESC).

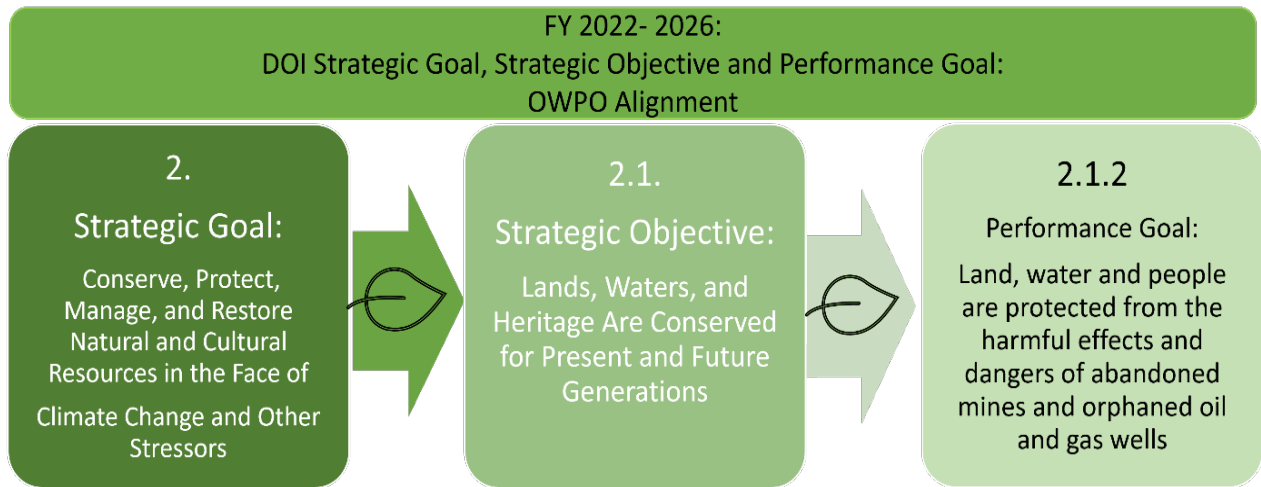
- 4.2. Build strategic partnerships to strengthen the orphaned wells community and achieve the vision of the OWPO. These partnerships expand the knowledge of the impacts of orphaned wells, develops processes and technology to identify and remediate well sites, and develops knowledge sharing opportunities. These partnerships include but are not limited to Department of Energy, American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Methane Interagency Team, and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

³ The OWPO Data Strategic Plan is being developed with an estimated implementation timeframe of FY2025, Q1. Goal language is subject to change.

MEASURES AND MILESTONES

DOI Strategic Plan Alignment

The OWPO Strategic Plan aligns with the DOI FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. All OWPO activities flow from DOI Strategic Objective 2.1 and are designed to achieve Performance Goal 2.1.2.



DOI/OWPO Performance Measures

Performance Measures	2024 Target	2025 Target
2.1.2.1. Percentage of total orphaned oil and gas wells plugged and reporting methane emissions data.	Baseline	Baseline
2.1.2.2. Percentage of total orphaned oil and gas wells that were plugged in an identified Environmental Justice (EJ) 40 zone.	Baseline	Baseline

DOI/OWPO Agency Priority Goal

Achievement Statement	Key Indicator	FY 2024/2025 Target
OWPO will close or remediate oil and gas wells.	Number of oil and gas wells closed or remediated.	7,900

Other Program Evaluation Tools

To measure progress made towards accomplishing the goals of the OWPO, several program evaluation tools were developed and are continuously revised, including a logic model, a risk inventory, and annual milestone plans. These evaluation tools and associated milestones are updated and revised on an annual basis and reported through various channels within the Department.

OWPO Logic Model Elements

In collaboration with Office of Planning and Performance Management (PPP), to support the Department’s Strategic Review process, OWPO developed a Logic Model that follows the flow of resources through to Outcomes. The Outputs and Outcomes are listed below and will be reviewed and updated routinely to ensure alignment with DOI’s Strategic Objectives.

2023 DOI/OWPO Logic Model Elements			
Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
Issue Tribal grants, federal awards, state initial grants, state formula and performance grants	States, Tribes, Federal agencies & bureaus collaborate with OWPO to identify orphaned wells	Plug identified orphaned wells on state, private, Tribal, & federal lands over the life of the program	Reclaim and remediate orphaned well sites and associated infrastructure
Develop and maintain a national repository of plugged orphaned wells integrated with financial, environmental, scientific, and community impact data	Use national repository to identify volume and location of orphaned wells	Collaborative engagement amongst all stakeholders via public website	Advance methods and technology to quantify methane emissions reduced as a result of plugging orphaned wells
Issue updated programmatic guidance to partners clarifying processes and procedures	Consult/collaborate with DOI & Tribal Nations to raise awareness and show success: White House Tribal Nations Summit Training/Outreach	Raise the profile of well-plugging and remediation workers, underserved communities, union jobs, and investment in this workforce	Eliminate orphaned wells on federally owned lands
Public website for collaboration & coordination across stakeholders	Create good paying jobs in energy communities as a direct impact of federal contracts, Tribal & State grants	Strengthen plugging standards across states and implement reforms to prevent future orphaned wells	
	Robust scientific, academic, industry and federal innovation and engagement to further orphaned well plugging and remediation: consult/collaborate on building national repository trainings/symposiums		

Enterprise Risk Inventory

In FY 2023, OWPO collaborated with PPP to conduct an Enterprise Risk Assessment and develop a Risk Inventory. OWPO identified 14 potential risk events and developed associated risk mitigation strategies. These risk mitigation strategies, known as risk responses, serve to ensure the risk events do not impact the accomplishment of the OWPO mission. In FY 2025, OWPO plans to evaluate and update the risk assessment as necessary.

FY25 Milestone Plan (as of 09/01/2024)

Program	FY 2025 Q1	FY 2025 Q2	FY 2025 Q3	FY 2025 Q4
State Grants	Initial Grant- monitoring (\$550 million awarded, 25 grants)			
	Formula Grant Phase 1- monitoring (\$521 million awarded)			
	Matching Grants- continue review, award & monitor (\$2 million awarded)			
	Formula Phase 2 Application Open			
		Review and Award Phase 2 Applications		
				Monitor Phase 2
	Publish Draft Regulatory Improvement Grant Guidance and Public Comment Period (9/27/24- Dec)			
	Issue Final Regulatory Guidance (mid-late Dec)			
	Regulatory Grant Application open			
	Review and Award Regulatory Grant Applications			
Federal Funds	Monitor FY 2022 Funding for 267 wells on federal land (\$32.8 million)			
	Monitor FY 2023 Funding for 209 wells on federal land (\$61.4 million)			
	Monitor FY 2024 Funding for 103 wells on federal land (\$48.1 million)			
	Distribute FY2025 Funding (Pending \$93 million)			
Tribal Awards	Monitor Phase 1 grants (approx. \$34 million)			
	Monitor Phase 2 grants (approx. \$50 million)			
	Accept In-lieu of Grant requests			
		Publish Phase 3 Guidance		
				Open Phase 3