

# Orphaned Oil & Gas Wells in Arizona

## What is an orphaned well?

Orphaned wells are oil and gas wells that are not plugged, not producing, and have no owner or responsible party.

## Where does this money come from?

Arizona's Orphaned Well Program is funded by a \$25 million competitive grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Interior as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, to ADEQ who is working in partnership with the Arizona Oil & Gas Conservation Commission (AZOGCC).

## How many orphaned wells are there in Arizona?

Conducted on behalf of AZOGCC in 2022, ADEQ's initial records research for potential orphaned wells in Arizona shows an estimate of 246 possible wells. Currently the number has been reduced to just under 200 due to eligibility requirements of the grant. Many of Arizona's oil and gas wells were drilled in the early 1900's, before oil and gas regulations were established. Therefore, additional orphaned wells may exist.

## Why do orphaned wells need to be plugged?

Orphaned wells may provide a pathway from the wellbore for oil, gas, and other fluids to move underground between

different layers, into groundwater, and/or to the land surface. Unplugged or improperly plugged orphaned wells can also be a potential route for methane to be released to the atmosphere contributing to increased levels of greenhouse gasses.

## What do orphaned wells look like?

Orphaned oil and gas wells generally can be identified by the presence of industrial equipment or facilities at the surface, like tall metal pipes. Orphaned well sites can have a broad range of appearances, from deserted oil and gas production equipment to an open hole in the ground.



## How long will the project take?

The three year grant was awarded in Fall 2022. There are four phases of the grant: Site Assessment, Site Characterization, Plugging and Abandonment, and Site Restoration/Remediation which are to be completed by December 2025. Currently, ADEQ has completed the Site Assessment and has moved into the Site Characterization phase which includes field work.

## Want to find out more about the Arizona Orphaned Well Program?

Check out the Arizona Orphaned Well Program web pages:  
[azogcc.az.gov/content/orphaned-well-program](https://azogcc.az.gov/content/orphaned-well-program)  
 and  
[azdeq.gov/orphanedwells](https://azdeq.gov/orphanedwells)

You can also email us at [azorphanedwells@azdeq.gov](mailto:azorphanedwells@azdeq.gov) or call 602-771-4501

