



THE ABANDONED WELL ADMINISTRATION

After 150 years of oil and gas production, an estimated 10 million [onshore] wells puncture the United States. A plugged oil or gas well does not mean a permanently sealed well. Steel corrodes. Pressure builds. Gas seeps.

THE POLICY

The Abandoned Well Administration (AWA) is a proposed executive-level federal agency that will directly employ a new public workforce of displaced oil and gas workers. **AWA civil servants will identify and safely plug and decommission the 10+ million oil and gas wells and related infrastructure across our nation via 30+ field offices and an arsenal of rigs and equipment, equipment owned and maintained by the government.** Because steel corrodes and even plugged wells can fail and leak, the AWA would oversee and manage a national monitoring and safety response program. Thousands of highly trained AWA staff will respond to fugitive leaks, blowouts, and other emergencies. The scale of oil and gas wreckage is massive and the need for monitoring is indefinite, and as a consequence, the AWA will provide durable and lasting employment for decades.

THE PEOPLE

In the last decade, U.S. crude oil production doubled. The United States surpassed both Saudi Arabia and Russia as the world's leading producer of crude oil. At the same time, American employment in oil and gas extraction cratered. The oil and gas industry learned to siphon out more profits with fewer workers, and it's not going back. The dual trends of oil rig automation and precarious contracting practices will only accelerate this

trend. For oil and gas workers, **the transition has already begun.**

The industry's intentional loss could be our public gain. From rig managers to roustabouts, to geologists to landmen— each possesses valuable skills to confront the threats industry has imposed upon the world. Doubling down on a dying industry will not create jobs, but repairing our neglected public infrastructure will.

THE PROBLEM

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the European divestment of Russian natural gas have made the “fork in the road” of American energy policy all the more fraught. While American LNG will supply global gas markets in the near future, European and Asian governments have used the war to accelerate energy transition plans. A Gulf Coast LNG export terminal permit approved today will have nowhere to export in five years. Even if one ignores the catastrophic climate impacts of ramping up American fossil fuel production, American gas wells will deplete. Even if one ignores the potential diplomatic leverage American LNG can provide in the short term, that infrastructure (LNG terminals, pipeline hubs, strategic petroleum reserves, etc.) is geographically concentrated and vulnerable. Doubling down on fossil fuel production will not solve future energy needs and will create/reveal national security risks.



Julie Dermansky Photography

THE AWA WORKFORCE

While the oil and gas industry schemes ways to cut jobs, the AWA will be recruiting and retaining that workforce. There is a lot of work to do, and the AWA will be ready to do that work.

- **Paper Audit Staff:** There is no one single estimate or nomenclature shared between state and Federal agencies, let alone an accurate map or cataloging system. The AWA shall create a shared database and cataloging system. Paper audit staff shall populate that system.
- **Field Audit and Geotag Staff:** Before the hazards of oil and gas wells can be addressed, data records will be confirmed and compared to physical location verifications, then incorporated into a cross-jurisdictional database. Staff will physically assess and geotag well-sites using a variety of technology and tools. Redevelopment Staff: Staff will perform analysis on future beneficial use of land after reclamation, which will also include site-specific analysis for renewable energy production, sustainable agriculture, wildlife protection, ecosystem conservation, recreation, and reforestation.
- **Plug & Abandonment Staff:** Leak detection & repair and plug & abandonment work. P&A staff will also install methane, air quality, and groundwater monitoring equipment which will be synced to the database.

- **Emergency Response Staff:** The AWA shall create a direct national response hotline that allows American residents to alert the AWA of potential emergency situations and AWA Regional Field Office response teams will be deployed.
- **Remediation/Reclamation Staff:** Recruit, directly employ, and train displaced oil and gas workers to restore lands and habitat impacted by wells and their prior operation to near original land capacity or equivalent. Staff will also document the post-reclamation condition of the site and take air quality and water quality measurements

AT A GLANCE

The AWA will have multiple programmatic areas, but the guiding missions are:

- Identify, catalog and prioritize the safe decommissioning of former oil and gas wells and related infrastructure across the nation.
- Coordinate and manage an annual plugging & decommissioning schedule.
- Oversee and manage a national abandoned oil and gas monitoring and safety and response program.