

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Organization

Part 112: Planning, Management and Budget

Chapter 39: Orphaned Wells Program Office

Originating Office: Orphaned Wells Program Office

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39.1 Orphaned Wells Program Office (OWPO). The OWPO is responsible for carrying out the Secretary of the Interior's responsibilities under section 40601 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58), commonly known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (the "BIL"), November 15, 2021.

39.2 Program Authorities.

Section 40601 of the BIL.

39.3 Functions.

The OWPO performs the following functions:

A. Ensures the effective, accountable, and efficient implementation of the State and Tribal financial assistance programs, including the coordination mandated with States, the Secretary of Energy, and the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC) to implement those programs, as well as necessary support to the Federal program.

B. Oversees effective execution of the funding provided by BIL section 40601 to address legacy pollution from orphaned oil and gas wells on Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands.

C. Administers funding provided by BIL section 40601 to operate the OWPO.

D. Coordinates with Federal, State, and Tribal participants to remediate and reclaim orphaned wells, remediate contaminated soil, and restore native species and adjacent land.

E. Works with Federal, State, and Tribal participants to identify and prioritize wells and to measure air emissions and groundwater contamination leaking from wells.

F. Facilitates the identification and addressing of disproportionate burdens to disadvantaged communities caused by orphaned wells.

G. Ensures that the protection of natural and cultural resources is fully considered, and that environmental compliance requirements are coordinated effectively and documented throughout the financial assistance lifecycle.

H. Partners with Federal, States, and Tribes to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the continued identification of orphaned wells and develops a national repository of orphaned wells.

I. Plans, coordinates, and edits responses to internal and external data requests specific to orphaned wells program activities.

J. Establishes risk management and internal control guidance, under the general direction of the Assistant Secretary-Policy, Management and Budget (AS-PMB) and in coordination with the Office of Financial Management (PFM).

39.4 Organization. The OWPO is situated in the Office of the AS-PMB and is led and managed by a Director who reports to the Deputy Assistant Secretary – Policy and Environmental Management. The Director carries out OWPO responsibilities with the assistance of a Deputy Director and four division chiefs.

A. The Director provides executive leadership and serves as a key advisor and consultant to the Department of the Interior and its Bureaus on the opportunities, issues, and policies related to the orphaned wells program. The Director administers the programs and funding authorized by section 40601 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, ensuring the proper funding of Federal, State, and Tribal participants.

B. The Deputy Director helps lead the OWPO's response to high-priority assignments, represents the Director at major meetings, oversees enterprise risk management, and assists the Director in carrying out the functions of the OWPO, including the supervision of the four divisions chiefs.

C. The Division Chief - Federal and Tribal Program is responsible for overseeing funding to plug, remediate, and reclaim orphaned wells located on federally managed land and waters; developing and administering 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.

D. The Division Chief - Program Administration 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. Conducts program evaluations and identifies and facilitates opportunities for collaboration and coordination across programs and offices.

E. The Division Chief - State Program is responsible for developing and administering 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.

F. The Division Chief - Policy and Compliance Program is responsible for ensuring that the protection of natural, historical, and cultural resources is fully considered, and that programmatic compliance requirements are coordinated effectively and documented across the orphaned wells programs and throughout the financial assistance lifecycle. Develops grant guidance and programmatic policy, ensures participants comply with the terms and conditions of the award, as well as applicable jurisdictional requirements.

