



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, DC 20240

March 13, 2026

Ref: OWPO-DIR-2026-007

Dear Tribal Leader:

The United States Department of the Interior, Orphaned Wells Program Office (OWPO) is administering \$4.7 billion in financial assistance authorized under Section 40601 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, P.L. 117-58), to plug, remediate and restore orphaned oil and gas wells located on Federal, Tribal, State, and private lands. The OWPO recently published Revised Tribal Grant Guidance to ensure that implementation of the Orphaned Wells Program is consistent with the Administration's policy priorities and promotes the advancement of energy development and fiscal responsibility.

The Revised Tribal Grant Guidance (Enclosed) ensures that grant requirements closely align with the language in the authorizing statute and reflect this Administration's priority to de-regulate and cut red tape. Burdensome post-award requirements, such as pre- and post-plugging methane measurement, and compliance requirements based on Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act have been removed, and post-award limitations, such as the prohibition on carbon credits, have been lifted. With these revisions, Tribal grant recipients now have the flexibility to use awarded grant funding to better support their Tribal well plugging priorities.

To implement the Revised Tribal Grant Guidance, the OWPO plans to issue an amended Notice of Award for each existing Phase 1 and Phase 2 Tribal Development and Tribal Implementation grant. Along with the amended Notice of Award, your Tribal Nation may want to revise the current budgets and workplans associated with your grants. The OWPO is committed to making the process to amend existing awards efficient and will contact Tribal grant recipients to discuss the timing of and process for implementing changes to the Tribal Grant Program.

In the interim, please reach out to the OWPO Tribal Team Lead and designated Financial Assistance Officer Representative (FAOR), Michael Morden, at michael_morden@ios.doi.gov or 202-839-2039, if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to continuing to work with you and support your efforts to address orphaned wells on Tribal lands.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. Goldblatt
Director (Acting), Orphaned Wells Program Office

Enclosure