

Excerpts from Print Media, 2019-2020

Let's Hire Laid-Off Oil and Gas Workers to Fight Climate Change

***Two tough policy challenges. One elegant
solution.***

By Michael R. Bloomberg August 3, 2020,

Plugging a single abandoned well can cut its methane emissions by 99%, according to the EPA, and the work requires skills that oil and gas workers already possess. Yet despite the best efforts of state regulators, most abandoned wells — more than 2 million — remain unplugged. A federal program to plug so-called “orphan” wells could create as many as 120,000 well-paying jobs, while preventing hundreds of thousands of tons of greenhouse gases from escaping into the atmosphere. It's an idea that appeals to environmental groups, fossil fuel dependent states, and even some fossil-fuel industry leaders.

Fracking Firms Fail, Rewarding Executives and Raising Climate Fears

***By Hiroko Tabuchi, Updated Oct. 13,
2020, The New York Times***

Oil and gas companies in the United States are hurtling toward bankruptcy at a pace not seen in years, driven under by a global price war and a pandemic that has slashed demand. And in the wake of this economic carnage is a potential environmental disaster — unprofitable wells that will be abandoned or left untended, even as they continue leaking planet-warming pollutants, and a costly bill for taxpayers to clean it all up.

The environmental consequences of the industry's collapse would be severe.

Even before the current downturn, methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, was being

released from production sites in America's biggest oil field at more than twice the rate previously estimated, according to a recent study based on satellite data. Some experts say that with the industry in disarray, efforts to fix leaks of methane, which pound for pound can warm the planet more than 80 times as much as carbon dioxide over a 20-year period, may fall by the wayside. Low natural gas prices may lead to increases in flaring or venting, the intentional release of excess gas, the International Energy Agency said this year.

Thousands of Abandoned Oil and Gas Wells Threaten the Environment, and Taxpayers' Wallets

By Jessica McKenzie, February 11, 2020

Thousands of oil and gas wells have been abandoned across California, creating risks to the environment and the pocketbooks of taxpayers who could be stuck with huge cleanup bills, according to an investigation by the Center for Public Integrity, a nonprofit news organization, and the Los Angeles Times. About 35,000 wells are no longer producing, half of them sitting idle for more than a decade. By law, fossil fuel companies are required to post bonds to cover the cost of closure and cleanup of well sites. But the amount that the industry has provided—about \$110 million—is woefully inadequate, according to a study released in January by the California Council on Science & Technology. Analysis of that data by reporters for the Center and the Times found that cleanup costs could be closer to \$6 *billion*. That doesn't even include the cost of decommissioning offshore oil wells and platforms. Meanwhile these sites continue to release toxic gases, putting nearby residents at risk of illness or even gas explosions,

along with emitting greenhouse gases like methane.

“Abandoned and orphaned wells have been an issue for decades because the government has never required oil companies to post enough bond coverage to cover cleanup,” Congressman Lowenthal said. “With the steep decline in oil prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a possible explosion in the number of orphaned wells left behind by bankrupt oil and gas companies threatens to leave the American taxpayer on the hook to pay for most of the cleanup, with estimates range from \$46 million to as much as \$333 million, just for those wells identified by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) as being “at risk” of being orphaned.

Old, unproductive oil and gas wells could cost up to \$70B to clean up, says new report, Kyle Bakx · CBC News · Last Updated: April 8, 2019

A new report suggests cleaning up all of the old and unproductive oil and gas wells in Alberta will cost between \$40 billion and \$70 billion.

The Alberta Liabilities Disclosure Project (ALDP) — a consortium that includes landowners and scientists — came up with the figure using data obtained from the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER).

The figure is much higher than an AER estimate, which pegs the anticipated cleanup cost of all oil and gas infrastructure at \$58.65 billion. The AER's number includes pipelines and other facilities, while the ALDP only looked at oil and gas wells.

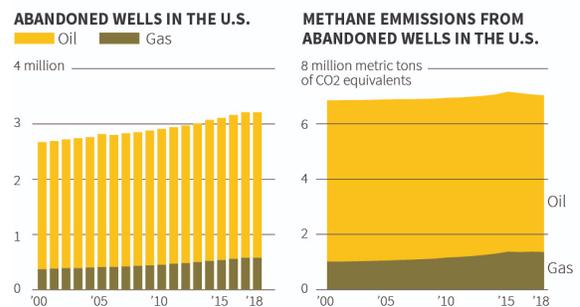
Special Report: Millions of abandoned oil wells are leaking methane, a climate menace, Nichola Groom, Reuters, 2020

The U.S. figures are sobering: More than 3.2 million abandoned oil and gas wells together emitted 281 kilotons of methane in 2018, according to the data, which was included in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's most recent report on April 14 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That's the climate-damage equivalent of consuming about 16 million barrels of crude oil, according to an EPA calculation, or about as much as the United States, the world's biggest oil consumer, uses in a typical day.

Researchers say it's impossible to accurately estimate global emissions from leaky abandoned wells without better data. But a rough Reuters calculation, based on the U.S. share of global crude oil and natural gas production, would place the number of abandoned wells around the world at more than 29 million, with emissions of 2.5 million tonnes of methane per year - the climate-damage equivalent of three weeks of U.S. oil consumption.

Abandoned wells leaking methane

More than a century of oil and gas drilling has left behind millions of abandoned wells worldwide, many of which are leaching pollutants into the air and water.



Source: Environmental Protection Agency

Staff, 4/6/2020

 **REUTERS**