

June 2022

The Community Connector

BIANNUAL NEWSLETTER - ISSUE 5

INSIDE

Expanding Northeast B.C.'s Water Monitoring Network

2022 Stakeholder Survey Key Findings

Working Together to Restore Balance

Cover photo taken from Alwin Holland Campground, near Hudson's Hope – view east from the shoreline of the Peace River.

Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the many Indigenous Territories and Treaty areas, each with unique cultures, languages, legal traditions and relationships to the land and water, which the BC Oil and Gas Commission's work spans. We also respectfully acknowledge the Métis and Inuit people living across B.C.

Message from the CEO

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This is my first chance to be part of this newsletter after joining the BC Oil and Gas Commission in November last year. I've hit the ground running with a number of changes underway across the organization, including myself as the Commissioner. That's a role I consider both an honour and a privilege and I look forward to continuing to connect and support the organization in its responsiveness to key issues of importance to the communities where it operates.

In this edition of The Community Connector, you'll find an update on work that's been happening for almost a year following a court case dealing with cumulative impacts. It is providing an opportunity to forge new relationships and ways of doing business with Indigenous communities.

But there are a lot of other learnings to be had, including highlights of our GIS group and some of the fascinating work they do; we've got results from our annual stakeholder survey - results that help us better address your needs; and as summer is just around the corner (I hope), we explain how the Commission manages water in times of drought.

That's just a sample of the articles you'll find as you keep reading. I hope you'll find it as interesting as I do and let me take this opportunity to officially say "hello", with a wish for everyone to have a safe and peaceful summer.

Michelle Carr
CEO

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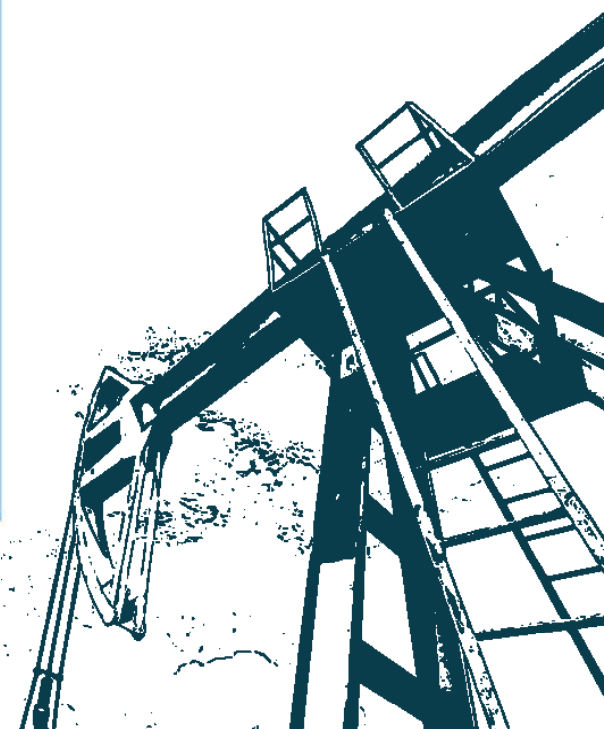
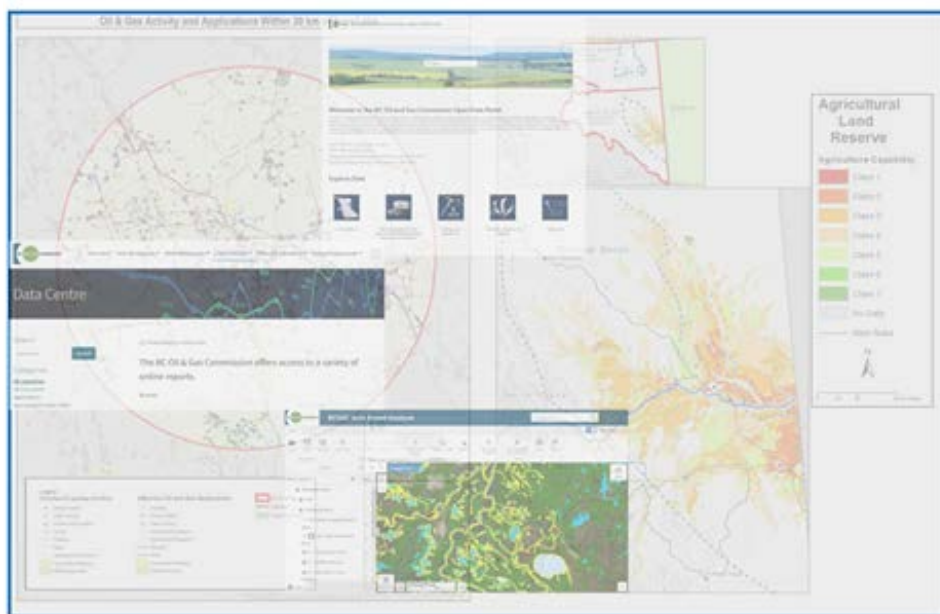
Highlighting Our Geographic Information System (GIS) Team

The Commission's GIS team (the team) consists of six diverse people who work together to support our staff, First Nations, stakeholders and the public. Here are a few examples of the complex work they do:

- Gathering data from other government agencies, industry, or internally from business units to make maps, summaries and reports.
- Analyzing data and sharing it appropriately and as needed.
- Deciding where and how data is stored. The team makes sure data is saved in appropriate formats and secure locations.
- Managing the software (e.g., ArcGIS, ArcPro, etc.) used in their work.
- Building models to analyze and report on complicated data.
- Training our staff and external parties on how to get the information they need.

The team provides tools and maps on the Commission's [website](#). You can access GIS data, that is continuously maintained and improved, using the [Open Data Portal](#) and the [Data Centre](#).

If you cannot find the GIS information you are looking for, the team can assist you. All you need to do is email your request to ogc.systems@bcogc.ca. The more information you include in your message, the better!



May 2022 Update - Expanding Northeast B.C.'s Water Monitoring Network

The Commission's Stewardship Water Team (Water Team) continued work on two hydrometric projects last winter. The first project is funded through the BC Oil and Gas Research and Innovation Society (OGRIS) and the second is through Geoscience BC. This article is a follow-up to the November 2021 Community Connector article – [Expanding Northeast B.C.'s Water Monitoring Network](#).

Project 1 – Water stations associated with the OGRIS project include Osborn River (Doig River First Nation), Aitken Creek (Blueberry River First Nations), and Le Bleu Creek (Saulteau First Nations). Hydrometric data collected last winter was processed and posted to the B.C. provincial Aquarius [WebPortal](#) and the Commission's Water Portal. As of April 2022, these three sites were reactivated to capture the spring melt. One new site will be chosen with Prophet River First Nation and installed in summer 2022, once site access improves. Monthly site visits to these locations are planned for the upcoming open water season (April to October).



Hydrometric station

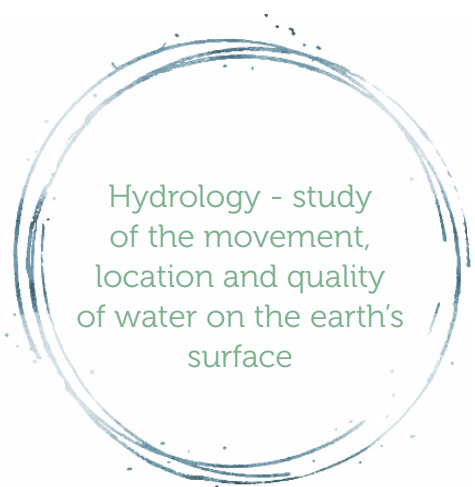
Project 2 – The five stations installed last year for the Geoscience BC project were activated in April for the first time. They are in the Doig River (Doig River First Nation), Blueberry River (Blueberry River First Nations), Alexander Creek (Halfway River First Nation), Hulcross Creek (Saulteau First Nations and West Moberly First Nations), and Stewart Creek (McLeod Lake Indian Band). Monthly field visits are also planned for these sites between April and October.

Water Authorization Specialists from the Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship's Fort St. John office will continue assisting with the monitoring of both projects' stations.

The OGRIS project has enabled us to build relationships with many First Nation communities. We hope the continuation of our hydrometric program will continue to foster this.

Due to health restrictions, a fall/winter in-class hydrometric training session for the Treaty 8 First Nations was postponed. A combined in-class/field-based training session is now scheduled for September 2022.

The Water Team is excited to lead these two projects in collaboration with our partners.



Managing Water During Times of Drought

In the summer of 2021, B.C. experienced a heat dome. We know the impacts of climate change affect our water resources and the Commission takes these impacts into consideration, especially during times of drought.

We want to make sure water is available for all users in northeast B.C. Water licences we issue include conservative withdrawal conditions. These conditions are tied to real-time flow rates from Water Survey of Canada hydrometric stations. In times of drought, the conditions ensure withdrawals are restricted or stopped.

Snowpack, rainfall, temperature, soil moisture, and streamflow conditions are used to predict droughts. Indicators like the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) are also used.

Our stewardship water team participates on the provincial drought committee, which actively monitors drought levels across the province and issues suspensions when needed. The Commission can suspend withdrawals under Short-Term Use Approvals for any length of time depending on drought conditions. This was seen last summer with [DIR 2021-02](#), suspending water diversions in the Nicola, Coldwater, and North and South Thompson Basins.

For more information on drought, we encourage you to visit the B.C. Government [Drought Information page](#) and [Drought Information Portal](#).

To learn more about climate indicators like ENSO and PDO visit [Indicators of Climate Variability and Change](#).



Stream in northeast B.C.



Compliance & Enforcement Update

Our Compliance and Enforcement (C&E) Department makes sure regulations and permit conditions are met for oil, gas and geothermal activities in British Columbia. The Commission has 22 C&E Officers based in four offices (Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson and Terrace).

On average, we complete 4,700 inspections every year. Inspections of infrastructure are usually done in person, where a C&E Officer travels to the activity site. During an inspection, non-compliances (or violations) may be found. An inspection report will notify the permit holder of our findings. It will also give them a timeframe to fix any issues. Depending on the nature of a non-compliance, an **investigation** may be done. They may also be done when a permit holder does not achieve compliance following the Commission's identification and correction process.

Our inspection program uses a risk-based assessment scoring model. The model guides inspection coverage and focuses our resources where they are most needed. Inspections may be done at the same time as operational events (e.g., construction start) or after a Commission review. Our planning cycle is done twice a year which makes up 65 per cent or more of total yearly inspections. While in the field, C&E staff can inspect other nearby activities. They base these inspections on knowledge of the area, inspection history, past incidents, land owner or public complaints, etc.

Investigations are used to collect facts, information and evidence related to a possible non-compliance before enforcement actions are taken. The investigation also determines if compliance was achieved and what enforcement is appropriate.

Aboriginal Liaison Program (ALP)

The Commission's C&E department works with the ALP to give participating communities an opportunity to be involved in compliance monitoring. Program liaisons work with C&E staff to do inspections, bring community concerns forward, and give input to help solve concerns.

In 2014 the Commission started the ALP. The goal was to build relationships between Doig River First Nation and the Commission. Since then, the ALP has grown to 10 ALP agreements with 12 Liaisons representing 16 communities in the north. It has evolved into a cross-government project that develops relationships between agencies and Indigenous Nations. For more information about the ALP, see our [May 2021 issue](#).

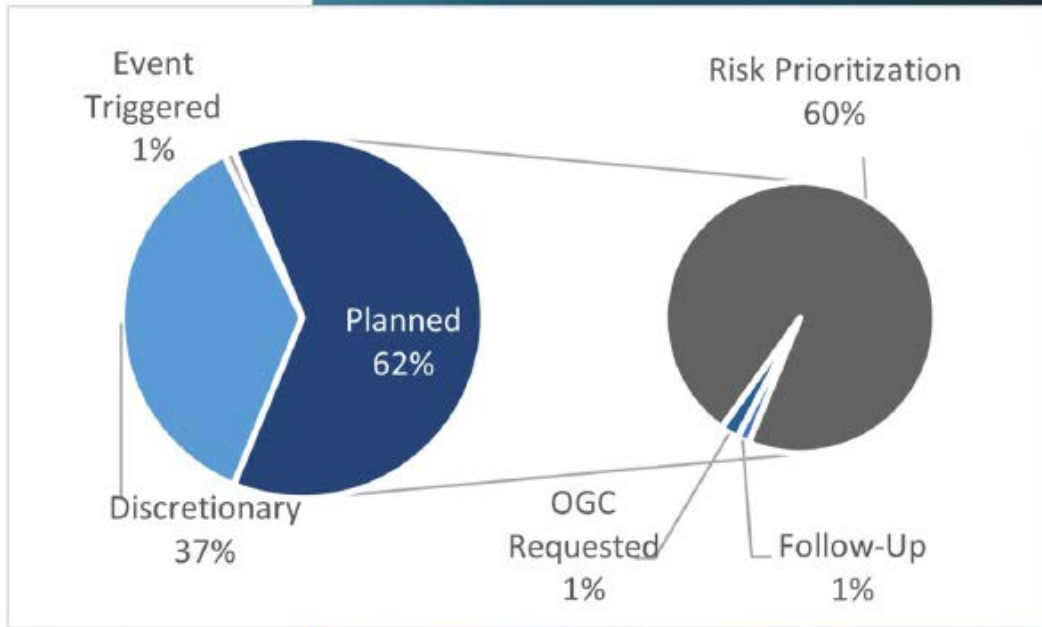


Figure 1 – Our Inspections Breakdown

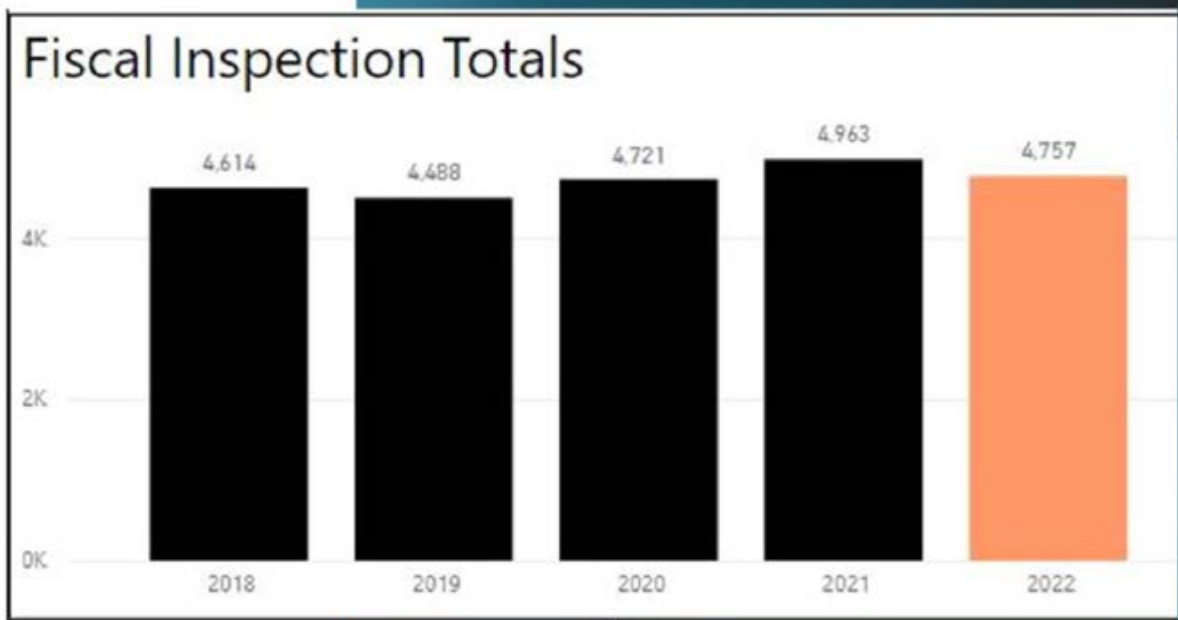
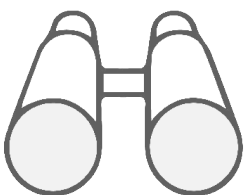


Figure 2 – Fiscal Inspection Totals

If you have an inquiry or concern about an oil and gas activity, please call us at 250-794-5200, or by mail to:



6534 Airport Rd,
Fort St. John, B.C.
V1J 4M6

3-1445 102 Ave,
Dawson Creek, B.C.
V1G 2E1

Or email us: OGC.Webadmin@bcogc.ca



Check Your Mail!

Did you know we reached out to land owners with an old-fashioned postcard campaign?

Why on earth would we print postcards and mail them, you ask? There are many reasons, including:

- Internet-based campaigns may not reach areas with limited access to internet.
- We want to increase awareness about the Commission.
- We're always happy to speak with land owners about their experiences.
- Increase the number of Regional Networking Group (RNG) members so we hear from a larger, more diverse group.

RNG members stay informed. As a member, you receive notifications about webinars, newsletters, and events as well as Commission and industry updates. You also get involved. Members tell us their story, ask us questions, take part in surveys, and provide

We look forward to when we can see you in person at our offices and in your communities.

In the meantime, we will continue to explore new and old ways to make sure we reach everyone in communities affected by oil, gas and geothermal activities.



We want to hear about the community you call home!

If you want to join the RNG, please call, write, or email us!

Call: 1-800-663-7867

Write: BC Oil and Gas Commission, Bag 2, Fort St. John, B.C., V1J 2B0

Email: Stakeholder@bcogc.ca

Join our Regional Networking Group



Working Together to Restore Balance

On June 29, 2021, the Supreme Court of British Columbia delivered its decision in *Yahey v. British Columbia*. It ruled developments approved by the Province of British Columbia (Province) have diminished the ability of Blueberry River First Nations (Blueberry) members to hunt, fish and trap in their territory. It also stated the Province must work with Blueberry to improve land management on Treaty 8 lands so they can continue an Indigenous way of life.

The Province is in negotiations with Blueberry and other Treaty 8 First Nations to develop a robust decision making process that includes direction from the court decision. The Commission takes part in those negotiations and will develop an approach for application decisions that provides for long term solutions. These will include:

- restoration of the landscape
- managing cumulative impacts
- providing a balanced approach that considers Indigenous knowledge

We recognize there have been delays in the application decisions. The Commission is committed to working with Treaty 8 First Nations to make sure we are regulating oil, gas and geothermal activities while protecting public safety and the environment. We will keep our industry partners, local governments and stakeholders informed throughout.

Reconciliation means bringing communities together, not dividing them, and finding ways to move forward collectively. We are working to achieve a path that maintains a healthy and sustainable economy for the benefit of everyone who lives and works in British Columbia.



At the BC Oil and Gas Commission, public safety is at the heart of what we do.

Watch this [three-minute video](#) to learn about how we protect public safety and safeguard the environment through the sound regulation of oil, gas and geothermal activities in B.C.

2022 Stakeholder Survey Key Findings

2022 Stakeholder Survey Key Findings

The BC Oil and Gas Commission conducts an annual survey with stakeholders across British Columbia. For the past four years the focus has been on land owners and local government who live directly in or adjacent to areas where oil and gas activity is taking place, or is planned to take place.

The survey measures and tracks the following:



Awareness and familiarity with major oil & gas projects



Awareness and familiarity with the Commission's functions and roles



Perceptions of the Commission's effectiveness at meeting their mission's goals



Past year usage and performance of various channels for interacting with the Commission

AWARENESS OF THE COMMISSION'S RESPONSIBILITIES, INITIATIVES, ACTIVITIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE COMMISSION'S EFFECTIVENESS

Awareness is highest for the Commission's responsibility to consult with First Nations (81 per cent) and enforce compliance with regulations (79 per cent). Stakeholders were less aware of its responsibilities to monitor seismic activity (58 per cent) and take over the management of sites and facilities from operators no longer able to manage them (47 per cent).

Stakeholders were most aware of initiatives around reclamation of orphan and dormant wells (41 per cent) and work with scientists and researchers to reduce and prevent impacts of hydraulic fracturing (36 per cent). This year more stakeholders were aware of the Commission's regulation to reduce methane emissions, increasing to 34 per cent from 21 per cent in 2021.

Perceptions of the Commission's effectiveness are in line with last year. The Commission received excellent/good ratings from six in ten stakeholders for their efforts to ensure industry complies with regulations (58 per cent) and protect public safety (61 per cent). About half of respondents gave the Commission strong scores for safeguarding the environment (53 per cent), respecting land owners affected by oil and gas activity (49 per cent) and consulting with First Nations (53 per cent).



CONFIDENCE IN THE COMMISSION'S PROJECT DECISION-MAKING

62 per cent of stakeholders are very or somewhat confident the Commission makes fair and balanced decisions for approval of oil, gas and geothermal projects in B.C., while 18 per cent are not at all confident.

CONTACT WITH THE COMMISSION

Awareness of the Commission's communication channels (website, email, Land Owner Liaisons, Emergency Officers, Compliance and Enforcement Inspectors, webinars, ability to call in a complaint, written submissions) has improved since 2019 with nine in ten stakeholders aware of each channel. Those who interact with the Commission gave staff top marks for communicating in a way that is easy to understand and for being polite and respectful. Emergency Officers, Compliance & Enforcement Officers and Land Owner Liaisons are perceived as highly respectful of stakeholder concerns. Commission webinars are rated highly for presenting information in a way that is easy to understand. Website users find it easy to navigate and understand.

STAKEHOLDER SUGGESTIONS

Survey respondents provided several comments for the Commission including:



Increase public awareness about what the Commission does



Keep stakeholders up-to-date on oil and gas project progress and potential impacts



Hold oil and gas companies accountable for their actions



Exercise stronger compliance and enforcement of regulations



If you have an inquiry or concern about an oil and gas activity, please call us at 250-794-5200.



Major Projects Update

As two major projects in B.C. reached construction milestones in 2022, the BC Oil and Gas Commission continues its regulatory oversight both on the ground and through engagement.

LNG Canada announced in January it completed over 50 per cent construction at its LNG export facility in Kitimat. Key construction activities in the past year included completing one of the world's largest storage tanks and receiving the first large module constructed overseas. The Coastal GasLink pipeline, which runs from northeast B.C. to Kitimat and will supply gas to LNG Canada, reached 50 per cent construction completion in February 2022. Over 95 per cent of the route is cleared and pipe installation is taking place in most areas.

The Commission is the provincial regulator for both projects. We work to make sure companies understand, respect, and meet or exceed all regulations, standards and permit conditions. Achieving this involves a range of subject matter experts, including engineers, biologists and land and habitat specialists.

On the ground, our compliance and enforcement team does regular site inspections on both projects. They also respond to incidents and address concerns from land owners, First Nations, the public and other stakeholders. Our offices across northern B.C. are in proximity to construction activities.


We undertake routine inspections and respond quickly and efficiently when needed. Regular progress meetings are held with the two companies to update construction activities and prioritize inspections. There are also processes in place to make sure Canadian construction standards are met for LNG Canada equipment

constructed overseas (check out this story on our [website](#) for more details on how it works).

The Commission also continues to engage with stakeholders throughout construction. This includes interacting with First Nations, local governments, land owners and other stakeholders to answer questions and provide updates on our oversight of the projects. For example, in April 2022 Commission staff were in Kitimat to meet with LNG Canada, its construction contractor JGC Fluor, Haisla Nation and the District of Kitimat.

Open communication with other regulators involved with the projects, such as the B.C. Environmental Assessment Office, is also needed to ensure regulatory processes are coordinated.

Check out our website for more information on [major projects](#) and the Commission's [compliance framework](#). Construction updates are available on the LNG Canada and Coastal GasLink websites.



Permit condition -
A stipulation added
to an Application's
Authorization or
Permission by a
Reviewer.

MYTH BUSTED

Myth! The Commission is responsible for carbon tax.

The Federal Government began a coordinated nation-wide carbon tax.

The Climate Action Secretariat (within the Ministry of Environment) oversees B.C.'s carbon tax as well as carbon offsets, carbon credits, greenhouse gas reporting and the [CleanBC](#) initiative.

The New Permittee Capability Assessment

On April 1, 2022, the Commission launched the Permittee Capability Assessment (PCA). This new program replaced the Liability Management Rating (LMR), introduced in 2010.

Under the PCA, we assess a company's potential liability using their dormant, inactive, and marginal (lower producing) sites. We call this their DIM Liability. With the PCA focusing on these sites, companies should be motivated to restore DIM sites faster to lower their liability. Also, by encouraging permit holders to proactively reduce their liability, we hope to see fewer orphan site designations in the future.

The PCA focuses on companies with poor financial performances. These companies are required to provide security deposits and complete liability reduction work to reduce their DIM liability. Many more companies are expected to have requirements under the PCA than under the previous LMR program. This should help reduce the risks associated with oil and gas activity in B.C.

For more information on the PCA, please see the [Industry Bulletin](#) on our website and our [Liability Management](#) webpage.

Don't remember much about the LMR? Revisit the [June 2020 issue of The Community Connector](#) to refresh your memory!

Orphans Update



It's been another busy and exciting year for the Orphan Restoration team. Making good use of the orphan levy collected from industry, we performed decommissioning or restoration work on more than 300 orphan sites between April 2021 and March 2022. More than 18 per cent of our sites are reclaimed. As for the others we are still working on, about half had wells plugged and equipment removed. A great deal of effort over the last year focused on sites near Fort St. John. With much of the equipment removed, we can continue to increase the number of sites we reclaim each year.

The summer of 2022 through to 2023 promises to be another ambitious fiscal year. We plan on completing work on another 350 sites! This work will involve finishing the plugging of all remaining wells and removing remaining equipment on sites near the Fort St. John and Farmington area.

In these areas we'll also be reclaiming more sites. Our people, partners, and contractors will also be working on sites in the Del Rio area near Chetwynd, the Buick Creek region, east of the Drake in Ladyfern, and the Kotcho Lake area near Fort Nelson.

For more information on the orphan fund, feel free to visit our website (a new report on work in 2021/22 is coming soon):

<https://www.bcogc.ca/what-we-regulate/oil-gas/orphan-sites/>

We look forward to seeing you out there!



Photo of two rigs taken from a drone

Well Decommissioning: To plug and seal a well. This is also called “abandonment”.

Site Decommissioning: Disconnecting and removing equipment from the site.

Restoration: Refers to the process of remediation and reclamation.

Remediation: The removal of contamination and clean up of a site.

Reclamation/Reclaim: Involves cleanup of the surface – the redistribution of subsoil and topsoil, with the site re-graded and contoured to match its surroundings. Ecologically suitable species are planted and the site is brought back to its pre-disturbance state.



MYTH BUSTED

Myth! Taxpayers pay for orphan well cleanup.

The Orphan Site Reclamation Fund is a levy on industry permit holders. It is used to pay the cost of restoring orphan sites in B.C. This levy allows the Commission to pay the cost of decommissioning and restoring orphan sites.

In April 2020, B.C. received \$15 million from the federal government to further address orphan site restoration. This one-time payment was to create jobs, protect the environment and stimulate the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an innovative regulator, we are always looking for new and effective ways to safeguard the environment, especially at hard-to-reach oil and gas sites. In the last couple of years, we have been using laser technology to do aerial surveys of decommissioned wells. Watch this [50 second video](#) to learn more about it!



June 2022

The Community Connector



Discover how we regulate energy in B.C.