

# Restoring Inactive Energy Sites

The British Columbia Energy Regulator (BCER) oversees the full life cycle of energy resource activities in B.C. and is committed to ensuring energy resource activities are undertaken in a manner that is safe, environmentally leading and socially responsible.

An important part of this commitment is ensuring inactive industry sites, such as oil and gas wells, are restored to their pre-activity states in a timely and thorough manner.

Restoration work of inactive energy sites is completed under one of three programs covering, respectively: (1) Dormant Sites, (2) Orphan Sites, and (3) Legacy Sites.

These program streams create varied opportunities for the BCER, industry and First Nations communities to collaboratively undertake restoration activities.

## Dormant Sites

A well, facility or pipeline is considered dormant if it does not meet a threshold of activity for five consecutive years or does not produce for at least 720 hours a year.

Once a site is designated as dormant, regulation requires that the industry operator decommission, assess and restore the site under prescribed timelines.

### Who manages the work?

The industry operator, under the regulation of the BCER.

### Who funds the work?

The industry operator.

## Orphan Sites

“Orphan” sites are wells, facilities, pipelines and associated areas where an oil and gas company is declared bankrupt or cannot be located.

Once designated as an orphan, responsibility for management of site cleanup and restoration falls to the BCER, and is paid for out of the industry-funded Orphan Site Reclamation Fund.

To meet our mission of protecting public safety and the environment, we deactivate pipelines and abandon high priority wells within one year of orphan designation. Once safe, we plan large-scale programs, optimized for efficiency, with an aim to restore sites within 10 years.

### Who manages the work?

The BC Energy Regulator.

### Who funds the work?

Industry operators, through mandatory contributions to the Orphan Site Reclamation Fund.

## Legacy Sites

Following agreements between the Province and several Treaty 8 First Nations to address cumulative impacts of industrial development in the Nations’ territories, the government has agreed to establish funds for restoration initiatives to “heal the land and people.” Legacy sites - where the land has historically been disturbed but there are no remaining responsibilities for restoration - provide an important restoration opportunity to help achieve this goal.

### Who manages the work?

First Nations and other industry operators will complete and/or direct projects under authorizations issued by the BCER.

### Who funds the work?

Funds established by the Province, with contributions from industry operators through disturbance fees. Funding may come from other sources, such as the BC Oil and Gas Research and Innovation Society.



## The typical restoration process of dormant or orphan sites:

### 1. Deactivation

Drain and clean lines and equipment.



### 3. Site decommissioning

Remove and salvage/dispose of equipment.



### 2. Well decommissioning

Permanently plug and cut/cap the wellbore.



### 4. Investigation

Review historical information and investigate soil and groundwater.

### 5. Remediation

Remove or treat soil and/or groundwater contamination.



### 6. Reclamation

Redistribute soils and revegetate for eventual return to pre-disturbance state.



### Seismic lines

Seismic lines are narrow, linear forest clearings created to undertake geophysical surveys during resource exploration. With no infrastructure to speak of, they typically only require reclamation.



### Ecological Suitable Species

The BCER has regulatory requirements to use “ecologically suitable species” to promote the restoration of wildlife habitat comprising a suitably diverse plant community that is “ecologically appropriate to existing and future site conditions, surrounding ecological situations and land uses.”