



# GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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## **Shapiro Administration Has Plugged 100 Orphaned & Abandoned Wells in Just 10 Months, Surpassing Total Over Previous 6 Years Combined**

*Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, the PA Department of Environmental Protection has dramatically ramped up capping and plugging, reducing methane emissions, improving public health, and creating jobs in Western Pennsylvania.*



**Harrisburg, PA** – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro, the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)** highlighted the Shapiro Administration's historic work to cap and plug orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells across Pennsylvania.

As of today, the Shapiro Administration has capped and plugged 100 wells under the Governor's leadership – more wells than in the prior 6 years combined. The 100<sup>th</sup> well was plugged at Hillman State Park under an emergency contract with Yost Drilling after DEP followed up on reports from local residents concerned about the risks abandoned wells pose to public health and safety.

"My Administration is making real progress towards tackling a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions here in Pennsylvania, and creating thousands of good-paying, union jobs in the process," said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. "We must reject the false choice between protecting jobs and protecting our planet. I believe we can do both – we can embrace the Commonwealth's role as an energy leader, create good-paying jobs, and fulfill our constitutional obligation to protect Pennsylvania's clean air and pure water. Let's plug the wells, improve our air quality, and strengthen our communities."

Capping and plugging orphaned and abandoned wells improves public health, reduces planet-warming methane emissions, and creates good-paying jobs. That's why Governor Shapiro has directed the DEP to draw down as much federal funding as possible to cap and plug the orphaned and abandoned wells that dot Pennsylvania.

"We are grateful to Governor Shapiro for his leadership in moving to address orphaned and abandoned wells, said **Amanda Leland, Executive Director of Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)**. "These wells can leak methane and air toxics, contaminate groundwater and surface water, create an explosion risk for nearby structures, and significantly reduce property values. President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has helped jumpstart orphan well plugging in Pennsylvania – providing critical funds – and can help chip away at the state's tens of thousands of documented orphan wells while work continues to identify the estimated hundreds of thousands of undocumented orphaned and abandoned wells in the Commonwealth."

DEP has already allocated unprecedented resources to plug orphaned and abandoned wells, which has allowed Pennsylvania to leverage millions in federal funding under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Thanks to the IIJA, Pennsylvania is poised to receive more than \$400 million in the coming years to cap and plug wells across the Commonwealth. This has already led to a dozen additional DEP staff specifically working on wells in Western Pennsylvania alone.

"The Shapiro Administration's orphaned and abandoned well plugging program is a win for the environment, our communities, and the industry, said **Scott Kiger, CEO of Yost Drilling**. "This program benefits local businesses and provides long-term employment

opportunities for the residents of our state. Yost Drilling is proud to be a part of this milestone for Pennsylvania.”

Through IIJA funding and existing state funding for DEP, the Commonwealth is moving to tackle this massive contributor of greenhouse gasses.

More than approximately 350,000 orphaned wells across our Commonwealth make up nearly 8% of our total methane emissions. Methane is particularly dangerous because it is up to 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide – warming our planet and contributing to air pollution that damages our lungs and our hearts.

Because many wells in Pennsylvania were drilled before modern mapping and regulations, DEP only had locations for about 30,000 wells, a fraction of the estimated 350,000 orphaned wells. For too long, the Commonwealth had inadequate resources to address the problem.

“Today’s celebration highlights the Shapiro Administration’s commitment to investing in our environment and public resources as a key driver for wellbeing and economic success in Pennsylvania,” said **Davitt Woodwell, President of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)**. “From tackling the cost and challenge of our extraction legacy to creating an Office of Outdoor Recreation, Pennsylvania’s brightest future is one that serves environmental, community, and economic prosperity together.”

DEP has been using the funding provided by the IIJA to inspect and inventory more orphaned and abandoned wells, and to implement a new enforcement strategy. DEP is aggressively going after operators who are walking away from wells and stepping in with emergency plugging contracts where needed to protect public health.

The Shapiro Administration is also prioritizing environmental justice when deciding which wells to tackle. DEP is going after the wells that pose the greatest threat to public health and safety, as well as prioritizing wells located in environmental justice areas. DEP is looking at methane emissions and impacts on disadvantaged communities to put those wells at the top of the list.

Earlier this year, the Shapiro Administration [announced an updated environmental justice policy](#), which expanded the criteria to better include concerns of Pennsylvania communities most at risk from pollution and other environmental impacts and [created an updated mapping tool](#) that allows DEP to more accurately identify which communities qualify for environmental justice protections.

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