

**Los Angeles County
Oil Well Site Transition and Reuse Feasibility Study
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

This FAQ document is intended to clarify and summarize recurring questions and discussion topics raised during stakeholder and sub-group conversations related to the Oil Well Site Transition and Reuse Feasibility Study. In many cases, the topics discussed below are addressed in greater detail within the Study itself. References to relevant sections are included throughout this document to assist readers in locating additional context and discussion.

1. What is the purpose of this Study?

This Study is intended to support future County decision-making related to the remediation and reuse of oil well sites in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. The Study provides a planning-level framework for understanding the technical, regulatory, financial, environmental, and land use considerations associated with transitioning former oil production sites toward potential community-serving reuse.

The Study does not commit the County to acquire, remediate, or redevelop any specific site. Rather, it is intended to help inform future evaluation of potential remediation and reuse opportunities as sites progress through regulatory, technical, and community-driven processes.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 1 – Introduction
- Section 9 – Recommendations and Implementation Roadmap

2. Is this Study only about individual oil wells?

No. While the Study builds upon previous work related to idle oil wells, the focus of this feasibility analysis is on oil well sites more broadly. During site evaluation, it became clear that many parcels contain wells with mixed operational statuses, including active, idle, orphaned, and previously abandoned wells.

As a result, the Study evaluates broader site conditions — including ownership, environmental constraints, access, regulatory considerations, and redevelopment feasibility — rather than focusing solely on individual wells.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 1 – Introduction
- Section 4 – Criteria for Identifying and Screening Sites in Unincorporated Areas of LA County

3. How were sites selected for evaluation?

The Study builds upon prior County work that identified 42 high-priority idle wells in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County based on environmental risk, proximity to sensitive land uses, and equity considerations.

From this initial screening universe, the Study applied additional site-level feasibility considerations, including ownership, parcel configuration, well status, environmental conditions, access constraints, and redevelopment potential. The sites highlighted in the Study are intended to help evaluate and illustrate different site conditions and reuse pathways.

The Study does not suggest that these are the only sites suitable for future evaluation, nor does it establish a final prioritization list for implementation.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 4 – Criteria for Identifying and Screening Sites in Unincorporated Areas of LA County
- Section 5 – Site Selection and Specific Sites

4. Did the Study consider parcel size and existing site conditions?

Yes. Parcel size, site configuration, access constraints, surrounding land uses, and existing infrastructure were all considered as part of the feasibility evaluation process.

The Study recognizes that some sites may have limited or no practical potential for future community-serving reuse due to factors such as small parcel size, irregular configuration, lack of access, ongoing operational constraints, environmental conditions, or surrounding incompatible land uses. Other sites may support only limited or lower-intensity reuse opportunities.

Existing site conditions — including whether a site contains structures, paved areas, remaining oil infrastructure, or adjacent industrial uses — can also significantly influence remediation complexity, redevelopment feasibility, and potential reuse options.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 4 – Criteria for Identifying and Screening Sites in Unincorporated Areas of LA County
- Section 7 – Community-Serving Reuse Framework and Feasibility Considerations

5. Why does the Study discuss wells potentially needing to be re-abandoned to meet current standards?

Some wells evaluated in this Study were previously plugged or abandoned many decades ago under regulatory and engineering standards that differed from current CalGEM requirements. As part of the feasibility evaluation process, the Study notes that certain wells may require additional evaluation or possible re-abandonment to support future site reuse or to address evolving regulatory expectations related to well integrity and protection of groundwater resources.

This evaluation would require review of historical well records, well bore diagrams, casing conditions, plugging history, and whether producing zones were adequately isolated from freshwater aquifers. In some cases, changing standards, incomplete historical documentation, or concerns about long-term well integrity may result in additional regulatory review or well work before reuse can proceed.

The Study does not independently determine whether a specific well meets current standards; those determinations are made through coordination with CalGEM and other regulatory agencies during later phases of site evaluation and implementation.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 2 – Overview of the Site Reuse Process
- Section 3 – Oil Wells in Unincorporated LA County Background and Context

6. Does the Study recommend cleanup standards or regulatory requirements?

No. The Study does not recommend cleanup standards or regulatory requirements. Regulatory oversight and cleanup standards are determined by the appropriate oversight agencies, including CalGEM, the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs), and/or other agencies with jurisdiction.

The Study describes how these regulatory processes typically function and highlights the importance of coordination among agencies, responsible parties, and future site controllers. Cleanup standards are generally based on site-specific conditions and intended future land use.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 2 – Overview of the Site Reuse Process
- Section 3 – Oil Wells in Unincorporated LA County Background and Context

7. Who is responsible for plugging and abandoning oil wells?

Responsibility for oil well plugging and abandonment generally lies with the operator identified by CalGEM, even if the operator is not the property owner. In cases involving orphan wells — where no financially viable operator remains — the State would assume responsibility through state-administered plugging programs.

The Study also notes that ownership of the land and responsibility for the wells may be separate issues. Future reuse planning therefore requires careful coordination among operators, regulators, property owners, public agencies, and other stakeholders.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 2 – Overview of the Site Reuse Process
- Section 7 – Community-Serving Reuse Framework and Feasibility Considerations

8. How can liability and responsibility for oil wells affect future acquisition or reuse of oil well sites?

The Study recognizes that liability, bonding requirements, and responsibility for well plugging and abandonment can affect future acquisition and reuse of oil well sites, particularly for public agencies, nonprofit organizations, land trusts, and other entities interested in community-serving redevelopment.

As discussed in the Study, responsibility for well plugging and abandonment generally remains with the operator identified by CalGEM, even when the operator is not the property owner. However, questions related to liability transfer, financial assurance, long-term stewardship, and site-specific legal obligations can influence site feasibility, acquisition decisions, and redevelopment timing.

The Study does not provide legal interpretations of State legislation or bonding requirements, which may continue to evolve through future legislative, regulatory, and legal actions. Entities considering acquisition or redevelopment of oil well sites should evaluate site-specific legal, environmental, and technical factors as part of future due diligence efforts.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 2 – Overview of the Site Reuse Process
- Section 3 – Oil Wells in Unincorporated LA County Background and Context
- Section 7 – Community-Serving Reuse Framework and Feasibility Considerations

9. What types of future reuse does the Study consider for oil well sites?

The Study recognizes that different sites may support different community-serving uses depending on factors such as environmental conditions, parcel size, ownership, surrounding land uses, community priorities, and regulatory considerations.

Potential reuse categories discussed in the Study include parks and open space, housing, community facilities, renewable energy installations, and other community-serving uses. In some cases, sites may support a combination of uses. The Study evaluates broad feasibility considerations rather than recommending specific land uses for specific sites.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 6 – Coordination, Community Priorities, and Case Examples
- Section 7 – Community-Serving Reuse Framework and Feasibility Considerations

10. How does the Study address public health concerns related to future reuse?

Protection of public health is a central consideration throughout the site transition process described in the Study. Future reuse of oil well sites would require environmental investigation, regulatory oversight, remediation, and verification processes before redevelopment could proceed.

The Study discusses how cleanup standards, remediation approaches, monitoring requirements, and institutional controls may vary depending on intended land use and site conditions. The Study also emphasizes the importance of ongoing community engagement and transparency throughout evaluation, remediation, and reuse planning processes.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 2 – Overview of the Site Reuse Process
- Section 7 – Community-Serving Reuse Framework and Feasibility Considerations

11. Is the Study focused only on short-term pilot projects?

No. While the Study discusses the value of pilot projects for testing and refining implementation approaches, it is also intended to support longer-term planning and future evaluation of additional sites over time.

The Study introduces a phased reuse process and decision-tree framework designed to help guide future site evaluation and implementation as additional wells transition away from production. The Study recognizes that oil well site transition is likely to occur over many years and under evolving regulatory, economic, and community conditions.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 2 – Overview of the Site Reuse Process
- Section 9 – Recommendations and Implementation Roadmap

12. Can the framework in this Study apply to cities as well as unincorporated LA County?

Yes. Although this Study focuses on unincorporated areas under County jurisdiction, many of the regulatory, environmental, technical, and redevelopment considerations discussed are broadly applicable across jurisdictions.

The Study notes that the frameworks and case examples may help inform future oil well site transition and reuse efforts by cities and other public or community entities throughout Los Angeles County.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 1 – Introduction
- Section 3 – Oil Wells in Unincorporated LA County Background and Context

13. Does the Study address land trusts or nonprofit ownership models?

Yes. The Study discusses community land trusts and similar nonprofit ownership models as one potential pathway for long-term stewardship and community-serving reuse. These models may help reduce speculative pressures and support long-term community accountability, particularly where public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and philanthropic partners work collaboratively.

The Study does not recommend a single ownership model but instead discusses different governance and partnership approaches that may be relevant under certain conditions.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 2 – Overview of the Site Reuse Process
- Section 6 – Coordination, Community Priorities, and Case Examples

14. How could changing oil prices affect site transition and reuse?

The Study recognizes that economic conditions, including fluctuations in oil prices, may influence the timing and feasibility of well closure and site transition activities.

Because well status, production economics, ownership conditions, and regulatory requirements may change over time, the Study emphasizes the importance of adaptive planning approaches and phased implementation strategies.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 2 – Overview of the Site Reuse Process
- Section 3 – Oil Wells in Unincorporated LA County Background and Context

15. Does the Study propose acquisition of specific sites?

No. The Study does not commit the County to acquire any specific property. The sites evaluated in the Study are used to better understand site conditions, barriers, opportunities, sequencing considerations, and potential reuse pathways.

Any future acquisition efforts would require separate evaluation, funding, policy direction, community engagement, assessment of potential liability, environmental conditions, and other legal considerations, and applicable approvals and authorizations.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Section 1 – Introduction
- Section 5 – Site Selection and Specific Sites

16. What is the overall takeaway of the Study?

A central finding of the Study is that oil well site transition is a complex, multi-step, and multi-agency process requiring long-term coordination, sequencing, funding alignment, and community engagement.

At the same time, the Study identifies opportunities for oil production sites to potentially support community-serving reuse and environmental restoration over time, particularly in communities that have experienced longstanding environmental burdens.

The Study is intended to provide a practical planning-level framework to help inform future evaluation, coordination, and implementation efforts as Los Angeles County continues advancing a just transition away from oil production.

Relevant Study Sections:

- Executive Summary
- Section 8 – Findings and Lessons Learned
- Section 9 – Recommendations and Implementation Roadmap