

Cap That Well



**Californians;
do you want your
tax dollars to bail
out fossil fuel
companies?**

Say **NO to a taxpayer
bailout for Big Oil's idle
well mess.**

Three companies — Chevron, Aera, and California Resources Corporation — own nearly 70% of the 41,568 inactive oil wells in the state. In all, it would cost \$10 billion to plug all current idle and orphan wells in California, and will eventually cost \$23 billion to plug all unplugged wells, including active wells that will become idle over the next twenty years.

These companies can pay to plug and remediate their wells with a fraction of their 2022 profits, but in California there aren't legally mandated timelines for cleaning up these wells, leaving California taxpayers vulnerable to pay with their health and tax dollars.

In 2022, these three major oil companies earned more than fourteen times the cost it takes to plug the state's entire inventory of inactive wells.

For Chevron alone, it would cost 5% of 2022 profits to plug all of its idle wells.

Plugging and remediating California's idle and orphan wells will create over 24,000 jobs that can allow for a thoughtful off ramp for oil jobs. Cleaning up these wells will also help resolve environmental justice issues that will benefit communities of color bearing the brunt of health impacts from living next to oil drilling.

Roughly 67,500 California wells, whether active, idle or orphan, are leaking methane along with co-pollutants like benzene. If California is serious about addressing methane emissions and public health, idle and orphaned wells must be plugged immediately.

The benefits of plugging inactive wells will only be realized if California overcomes oil industry lobbying and catches up to other states by requiring oil companies to plug and remediate wells on an expedited timeline. Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Colorado, and North Dakota all have laws that require companies to plug wells within one year or less after becoming idle.

All this and much more (i.e. San Luis Obispo County is home to 220 idle and orphan wells) can be found in the new report issued by Sierra Club's Beyond Dirty Fuels Team and Sunstone Strategies: [*\\$23 Billion Question: What Created California's Idle and Orphan Wells Crisis and How to Solve It*](#). The report offers a top five county and senate/assembly district breakdown of the cost of plugging California's idle wells. They will release a mapping tool in January that breaks it down for all city, county, senate and assembly districts in California.

Help Sierra Club kick off another strong year of environmental action in 2024 by [signing our petition to demand Governor Newsom and your elected leaders take action on idle oil wells in California.](#)