



# **RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS**

## **OIL AND GAS DIVISION**

### **OIL FIELD CLEANUP PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT - FISCAL YEAR 2015**





# RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

## OIL AND GAS DIVISION

November 17, 2015

To The Legislature:

S.B. 1103, 72<sup>nd</sup> Legislature, 1991 and S.B. 310, 77<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 2001 and S.B. 1, 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature, 2011 (§81.069(c), Natural Resources Code) require the Railroad Commission to submit an Annual Report to the Legislature on the Oil Field Cleanup Program. The information required by S.B. 1103, as amended by S.B. 310 and S.B. 1, is contained in this report. This report covers the period from September 1, 2014 through August 31, 2015.

The Railroad Commission remains committed to the success of the Oil Field Cleanup Program and to the protection of the State's land and water resources through activities funded by the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund. This report is posted on the Commission's website; however, should you have any questions about the material presented, please contact Santos Gonzales, Assistant Director of the Commission's Oil & Gas Division, Field Operations Section, at (512) 463-8561; Peter Pope, Manager of the Commission's Oil and Gas Division, Site Remediation Section, at (512) 463-8202; David Cooney, Director of the Commission's Office of General Counsel, Enforcement Section, at (512) 463-6977; or Lindil Fowler, Acting Executive Director, at (512) 463-6715.

Handwritten signature of David Porter in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Chairman David Porter

Handwritten signature of Christi Craddick in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Commissioner Christi Craddick

Attest:

Handwritten signature of Kathy Way in blue ink, written over a horizontal line. To the left of the signature is a circular official seal of the Railroad Commission of Texas, with the word "SECRETARY" visible below the signature.

Secretary

Handwritten signature of Ryan Sitton in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Commissioner Ryan Sitton

# RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

## OIL FIELD CLEANUP PROGRAM

### ANNUAL REPORT - FISCAL YEAR 2015

#### INTRODUCTION:

The Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund was created by the adoption of Senate Bill (S.B.) 1 (82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature, 2011). S.B. 1 replaced the previous Oil Field Cleanup Fund that was created by the adoption of Senate Bill (S.B.) 1103 (72<sup>nd</sup> Legislature, 1991) and modified by the adoption of S.B. 310 (77<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 2001). Under S.B. 1103, the State of Texas, through the Railroad Commission (hereinafter “Commission”), increased its financial ability to plug abandoned, orphaned oil and gas wells and to remediate abandoned, orphaned oil field sites throughout the State. S.B. 1103 replaced the previous Well Plugging Fund with the Oil Field Cleanup Fund and set the fund balance cap at \$10 million. S.B. 310 increased the production tax on oil and gas and several existing fees associated with oil and gas industry activity and increased the Oil Field Cleanup Fund balance cap from \$10 million to \$20 million. HB 3309 (83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, 2013) increased the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund balance cap from \$20 million to \$30 million.

The impact of the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund is clearly demonstrated by the increase in the number of orphaned wells plugged and sites remediated. From fiscal year 1984 to fiscal year 1991, the Commission plugged 4,078 wells at a cost of \$16,171,406 under the previous Well Plugging Fund. From fiscal year 1992 through fiscal year 2015, the Commission plugged 31,037 wells at a cost of \$234,895,356 (35,115 wells since fiscal year 1984 at a total cost of \$251.1 million) and cleaned up, assessed, or investigated 5,720 sites at a cost of \$70,676,214 using the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund and other state and federal sources of funds.

As of August 2015, the Commission was tracking 433,146 wells compared to 425,016 in August 2014. Of this number, 115,365 were inactive, shut-in oil and gas wells. Of the 115,365 shut-in wells, 38,794 were compliant inactive wells that had been shut-in less than 12 months and 64,416 were compliant inactive wells that were shut-in for more than 12 months, but belonged to operators with an active Organization Report (Form P-5) on file with the Commission and have filed the required financial assurance, a bond or letter of credit, and qualified for a plugging extension. The remaining 12,155 wells were non-compliant inactive wells that were in violation of the Commission’s plugging rule. Of the 12,155 non-complaint wells, 2,440 wells belonged to operators with an active Form P-5 on file with the Commission and 9,715 wells belonged to operators with a delinquent Form P-5. The Commission defines these 9,715 wells as orphan wells. These figures are represented on a percentage basis in Figure 1 and the distribution of wells for August 2015 monitored by the Commission is shown in Figure 2.

The operators of record plug most of the compliant inactive wells and some of the non-compliant inactive wells as required by Commission rules and regulations. However, some currently compliant and many of the orphan wells eventually require plugging by the Commission with Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funds and/or other state and federal funds.

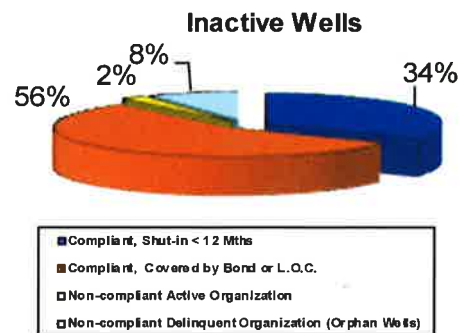


Figure 1

# Distribution of Wells Monitored by the Railroad Commission

As of August 29, 2015

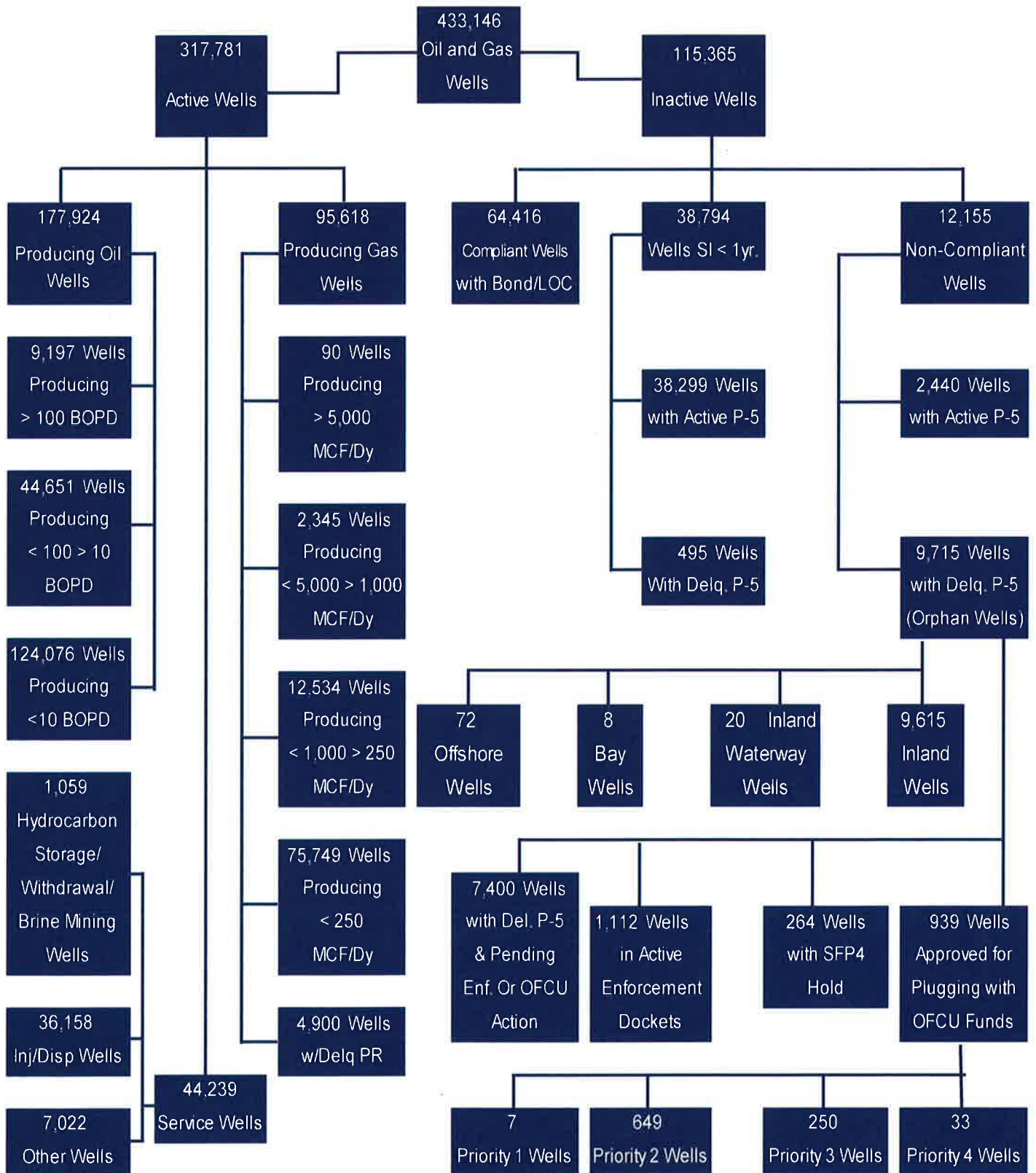


Figure 2

It is important to understand that the number of orphan wells is a dynamic number that changes daily, as wells are placed into and out of compliance. The Commission attempts to capture the dynamics occurring within the orphan well population on a monthly basis and depicts these changes during fiscal year 2015 in Table 1. Table 2 depicts the yearly dynamics beginning with fiscal year 2003 (September 1, 2002). The data in Table 1 illustrates that the number of orphan wells increased by 366 in fiscal year 2015 and has decreased by 8,256 wells since September 2002 (Table 2). However, the make-up of the orphan wells has changed. A total of 5,644 wells (Plugged, Returned to Active Status, P-5 renewal, Other) were removed from the fiscal year 2015 beginning inventory, but 6,010 new wells were added to the population of orphan wells throughout the fiscal year (Table 1). Since the beginning of fiscal year 2003, 125,526 orphan wells have been removed from the inventory and 117,270 new orphan wells have been added to the inventory (Table 2). The Commission's regulatory goals are to eliminate the threat of pollution posed by orphaned unplugged wells and to minimize the number of orphan wells requiring plugging with Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funds, or other state and federal funds. Figure 3 illustrates the decline in the orphan well count thru fiscal year 2010. Since that time, the orphan well count has shown a slight increase.

Month of Activity	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-15	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	Totals
Beginning Population (from previous month)	9,349	9,257	9,211	9,093	9,244	9,616	9,517	9,814	9,612	9,987	9,896	9,841	9,349
Plugged	(55)	(62)	(18)	(8)	(11)	(16)	(58)	(19)	(14)	(46)	(68)	(38)	(413)
Returned to Active Status	(2)	(4)	(2)	(4)	(5)	(27)	(3)	(6)	(10)	(7)	(6)	(101)	(177)
Operator Change	(173)	(90)	(32)	(49)	(45)	(16)	(48)	(72)	(47)	(57)	(38)	(34)	(701)
P-5 Renewal	(383)	(183)	(422)	(244)	(300)	(370)	(445)	(543)	(180)	(493)	(401)	(298)	(4,262)
Other Reasons	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(1)	0	0	0	(90)	(91)
Wells Added to Population	521	293	356	456	733	330	851	439	626	512	458	435	6,010
Ending Population	9,257	9,211	9,093	9,244	9,616	9,517	9,814	9,612	9,987	9,896	9,841	9,715	9,715

Definitions:
Plugged = Plugged and abandoned.
Returned to Active Status = Active producing or service well.
Operator Change = P-4 Operator Change was filed and approved. An operator change will not be approved unless the new operator has sufficient bond amount on file to cover the new wells and has an active P-5.
P-5 Renewal = The operator of record renews their P-5.
Other Reasons = Supporting documentation filed to correct shut-in date, well activity, etc.
Wells Added to Population = Wells not considered orphaned at end of previous month, but considered orphaned at the end of this month.

Table 1

**RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS  
OIL FIELD CLEANUP PROGRAM**

**ANNUAL REPORT –FY 2015**

Month of Activity	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	Total
<b>Beginning Population (from previous FY)</b>	17,971	16,770	15,305	14,208	11,287	9,579	9,323	7,900	7,036	7,869	7,476	8,644	9,349	17,971
<b>Plugged</b>	(1,527)	(1,726)	(1,756)	(1,877)	(1,514)	(1,143)	(1,426)	(1,256)	(413)	(1,125)	(293)	(317)	(413)	(14,786)
<b>Returned to Active Status</b>	(646)	(160)	(177)	(196)	(118)	(119)	(35)	(47)	(187)	(94)	(152)	(113)	(177)	(2,221)
<b>Operator Change</b>	(3,110)	(1,777)	(2,506)	(1,483)	(1,361)	(1,546)	(856)	(934)	(668)	(706)	(1,456)	(1,226)	(701)	(18,330)
<b>P-5 Renewal</b>	(8,581)	(8,144)	(6,907)	(10,336)	(8,697)	(5,737)	(5,056)	(5,271)	(8,778)	(6,764)	(6,701)	(4,479)	(4,262)	(89,713)
<b>Other Reasons</b>	(281)	(23)	(19)	(12)	(5)	(6)	(4)	(9)	(22)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(91)	(476)
<b>Wells Added to Population</b>	12,944	10,365	10,268	10,983	9,987	8,295	5,954	6,653	10,901	8,297	9,771	6,842	6,010	117,270
<b>Ending Population</b>	16,770	15,305	14,208	11,287	9,579	9,323	7,900	7,036	7,869	7,476	8,644	9,349	9,715	9,715

<b>Definitions:</b>	
Plugged =	Plugged and abandoned.
Returned to Active Status =	Active producing or service well.
Operator Change = P-4 Operator Change was filed and approved. An operator change will not be approved unless the new operator has sufficient bond amount on file to cover the new wells and has an active P-5.	
P-5 Renewal =	The operator of record renews their P-5.
Other Reasons =	Supporting documentation filed to correct shut-in date, well activity, etc.
Wells Added to Population =	Wells not considered orphaned at end of previous FY, but considered orphaned at the end of this FY.

Table 2

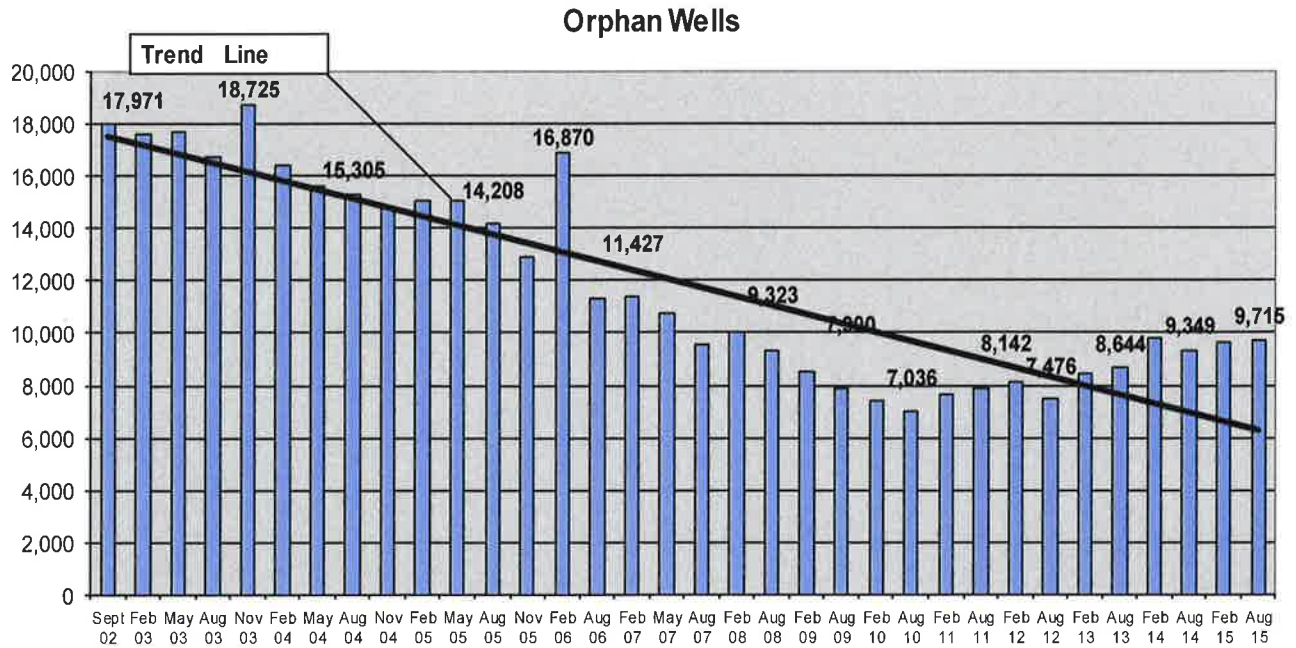


Figure 3

Revenue into the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund is derived primarily from production taxes and permitting fees paid by the oil and gas industry; but significant revenue is also contributed from enforcement penalties, reimbursements, proceeds from the sale of equipment and hydrocarbons salvaged from well plugging and site remediation operations, and interest on fund balances. Additionally, the Commission seeks other funding sources from state and federal agencies to supplement the activities of the OIL FIELD CLEANUP PROGRAM. Although the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund finances the majority of the Oil and Gas Cleanup and Regulation program activities, the wells plugged and sites remediated contained in this report were partially funded with federal monies received from Subtitle C Brownfield Grant Funds, and Section 319 Non-Point Source Grant Funds.

The following information on the OIL FIELD CLEANUP PROGRAM is reported annually as required by S.B. 1.

**I. NUMBER OF WELLS PLUGGED BY DISTRICT:**

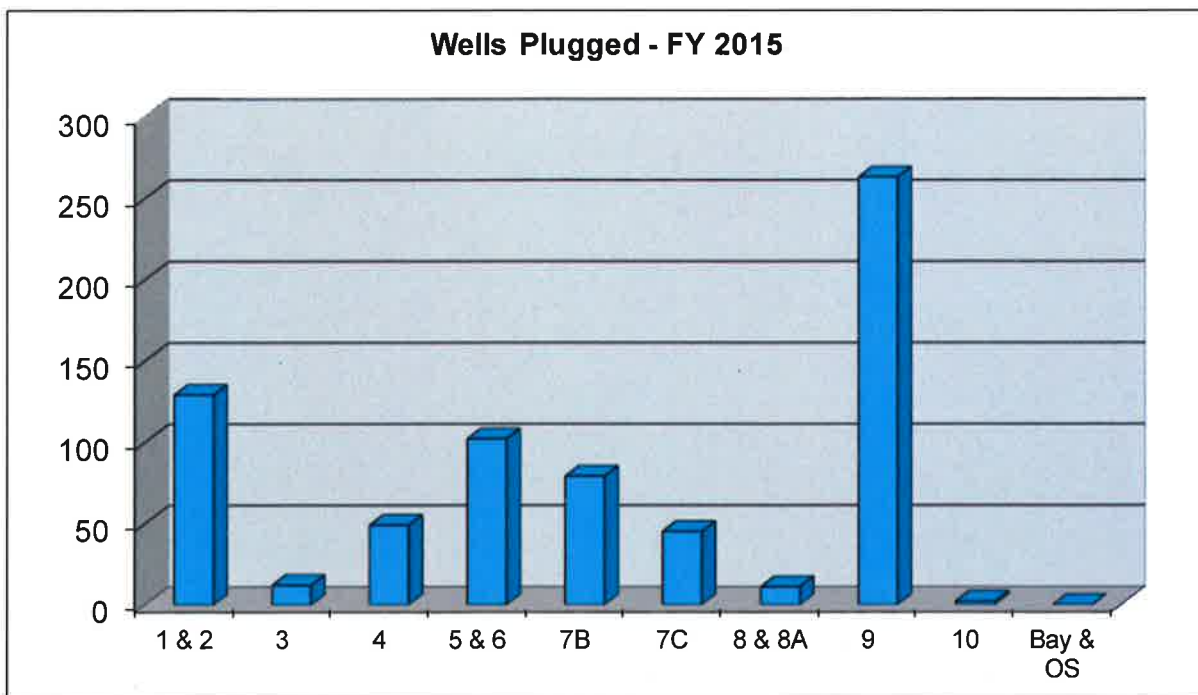
In fiscal year 2015, the Commission plugged 692 wells with Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funds. The total number of wells plugged represents those wells that are physically plugged and invoiced by the plugging contractors and files closed through August 31, 2015. Figure 4 illustrates the numbers of wells plugged by district during fiscal year 2015 and Figure 5 shows the number of wells plugged by fiscal year since the inception of the current Oil Field Cleanup Program, September 1, 1991.

During fiscal year 2015, the Commission’s well plugging expenditures totaled \$10,731,174. The average cost per well was \$15,507, which was \$11,064 less than the fiscal year 2014 average cost per well of \$26,571.

The Commission has approximately 207 well servicing companies with a P-5 Organization Report identified as an “Approved Plugger” and are authorized to plug wells in Texas. However, due to the level of activity in the oil and gas industry, competition for well plugging contractors is severely limiting the number of plugging contractors that bid on Commission contracts. As a result, fewer orphaned wells are being plugged by the Commission. During fiscal year 2015, the Commission awarded sixty-six (66) contracts to twenty-seven (27) well plugging contractors, of which, sixteen (16) had multiple bid awards. It

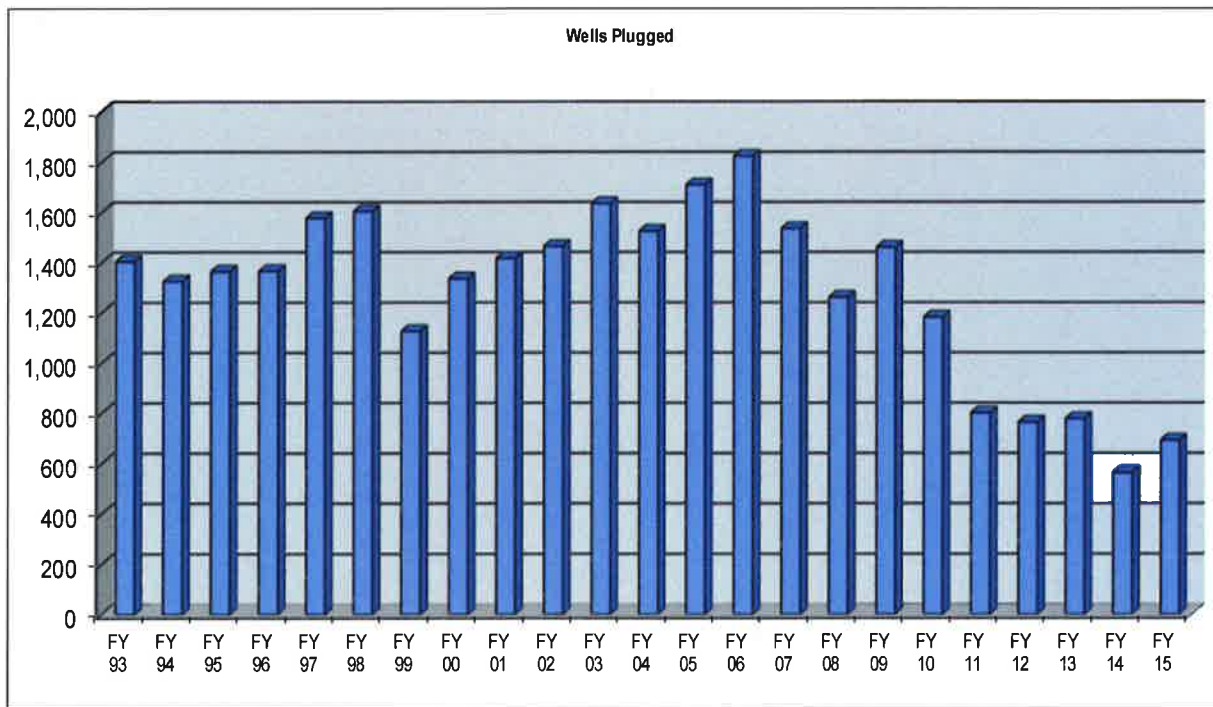


is important to note that the current state of the industry is expected to continue for many years.



District Office	1 & 2	3	4	5 & 6	7B	7C	8 & 8A	9	10	Bay & OS	Total
Wells Plugged	129	12	49	102	79	45	11	263	2	0	692

Figure 4



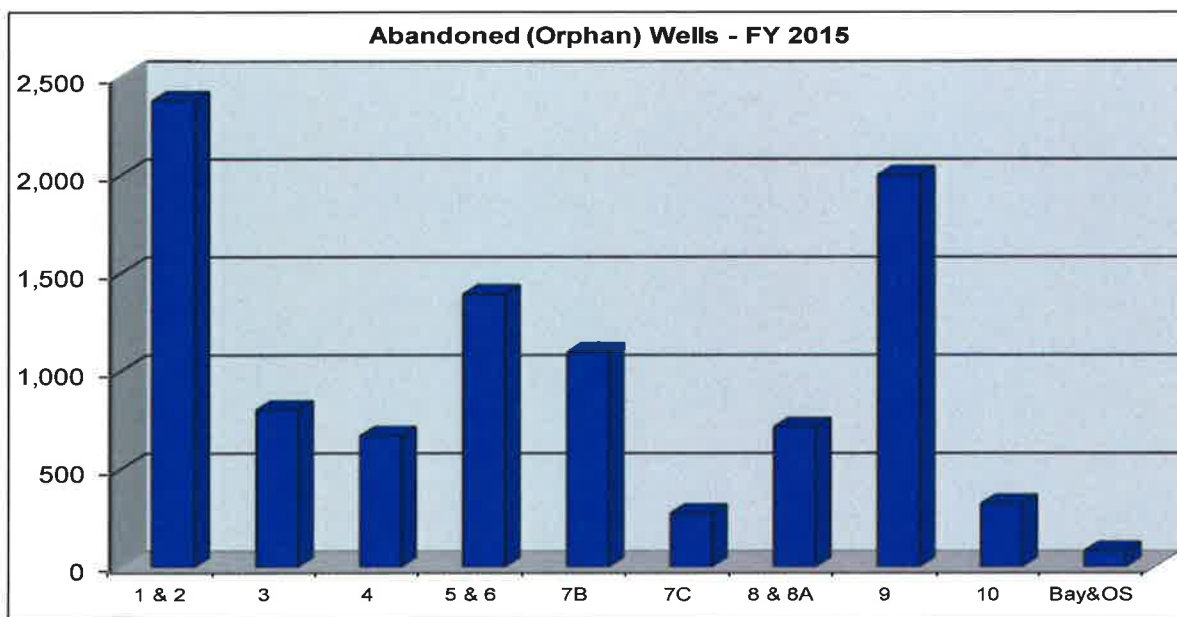
Fiscal Year	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07
Wells Plugged	1,324	1,404	1,325	1,364	1,366	1,577	1,604	1,126	1,335	1,417	1,464	1,635	1,525	1,710	1,824	1,536
Fiscal Year	FY 08	FY 09	FY 10	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15	Total							
Wells Plugged	1,261	1,460	1,182	801	764	778	563	692	31,037							

Figure 5



**II. NUMBER OF ABANDONED WELLS BY DISTRICT:**

As of August 2015, the number of abandoned, orphaned wells was **9,715**. The Commission defines these wells as orphan wells because they have been inactive for at least 12 months or more and the responsible operator’s Organization Report is delinquent. The number of orphan wells is a subset of the number of known inactive wells not currently in compliance with the Commission's plugging rule that is referenced in Section III of this report and illustrated in Figure 2. Figure 6, below, illustrates the number of orphan wells by district at the end of August 2015.



District Office	1 & 2	3	4	5 & 6	7B	7C	8 & 8A	9	10	Bay&OS	Total
Orphaned Wells	2,378	800	668	1,391	1,093	273	713	1,998	321	80	9,715

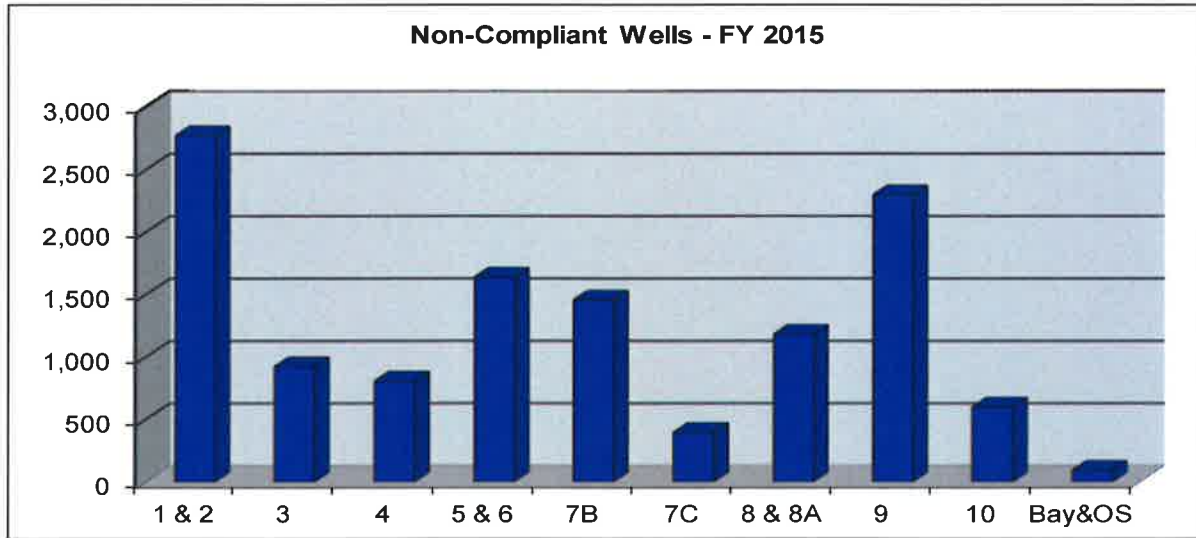
Figure 6

In addition to the 9,715 orphan wells, there are also an unknown number of old, unidentified wells in Texas, which have no records. As these wells are located, the Commission initiates plugging operations in accordance with the well plugging priority system, which is based on the threat the well poses to the environment and public safety. In fiscal year 2015, forty-eight (48) unidentified abandoned wells were plugged with Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funds, which accounted for 7% of all wells plugged by the Commission in fiscal year 2015.

**III. NUMBER OF NON-COMPLIANT INACTIVE WELLS BY DISTRICT:**

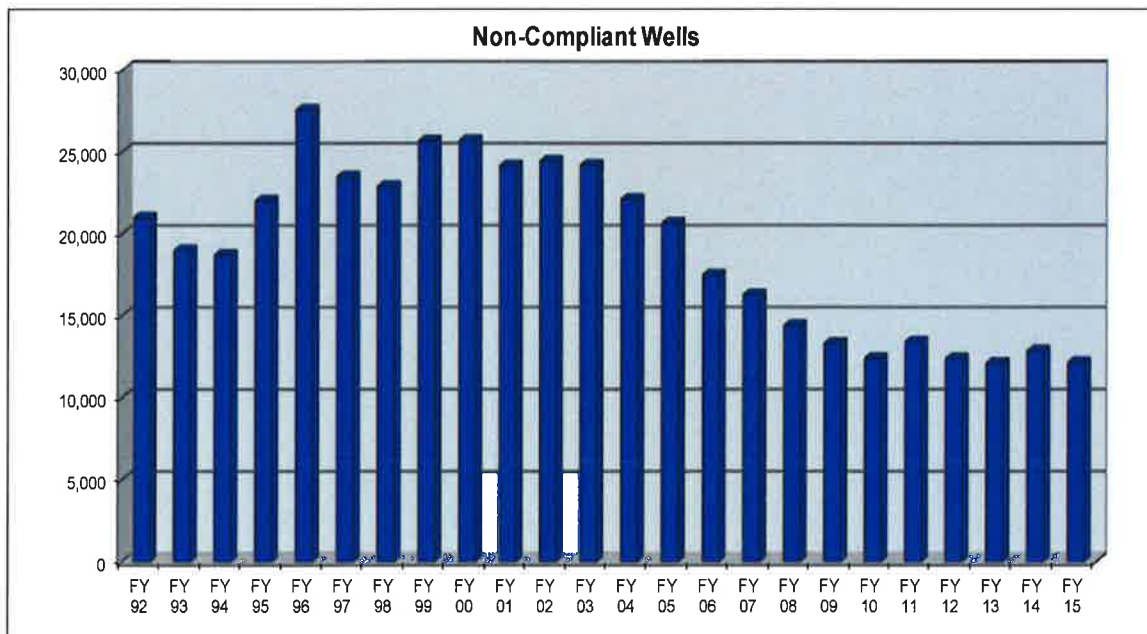
The number of known inactive wells not in compliance with Commission rules as of August 2015 totals **12,155**. The number of known inactive wells not currently in compliance with the Commission's plugging rule is determined from the Commission’s computerized records. The number represents wells that remain shut-in beyond the initial 12 month shut-in period authorized by Commission Statewide Rule 14 and do not have a plugging extension, regardless of whether the operator’s Organization Report is active or delinquent. Wells that are shut-in for less than 12 months are deemed compliant inactive wells. Wells may remain inactive beyond the initial 12-month period and are eligible for plugging extensions if the operator has the required financial

assurance on file with the Commission, and the wells are in compliance with all Commission rules and regulations. Figure 7 shows the number of non-compliant wells by district at the end of August 2015. Figure 8 shows the number of non-compliant wells in August, at the end of each fiscal year since 1992. Like orphan wells (subset of the inactive non-compliant wells), the number of inactive non-compliant wells is a dynamic number that changes daily, as wells are placed into and out of compliance.



District Office	1 & 2	3	4	5 & 6	7B	7C	8 & 8A	9	10	Bay&OS	Total
Non-Compliant Wells	2,772	922	806	1,637	1,455	395	1,180	2,298	598	92	12,155

Figure 7



Fiscal Year	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04	FY 05
Non-Compliant Wells	21,000	19,003	18,720	22,034	27,583	23,492	22,903	25,672	25,707	24,165	24,449	24,202	22,119	20,665

Fiscal Year	FY 06	FY 07	FY 08	FY 09	FY 10	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15
Non-Compliant Wells	17,498	16,293	14,415	13,333	12,410	13,414	12,389	12,117	12,872	12,155

Figure 8

The operators of these wells are required by Commission rules to plug wells at their expense upon cessation of production but may be eligible for plugging extensions if they have the required financial assurance on file with the Commission and the wells are in compliance with all other rules and regulations. The operators may also be subject to enforcement action if violations are not corrected and the wells are not brought into compliance with Commission rules and regulations in a timely manner. If the Commission plugs these wells with monies from the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund or from other state or federal funds, the Office of the Attorney General may initiate legal action against the responsible operator for collection of the plugging costs and may assess civil penalties.

Operators plug the majority of all wells plugged each year. In fiscal year 2015, 7,763 wells (92% of all wells plugged) were plugged by the operators of record, without the use of Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funds. Figure 9 depicts the number of wells plugged by operators since fiscal year 1992.

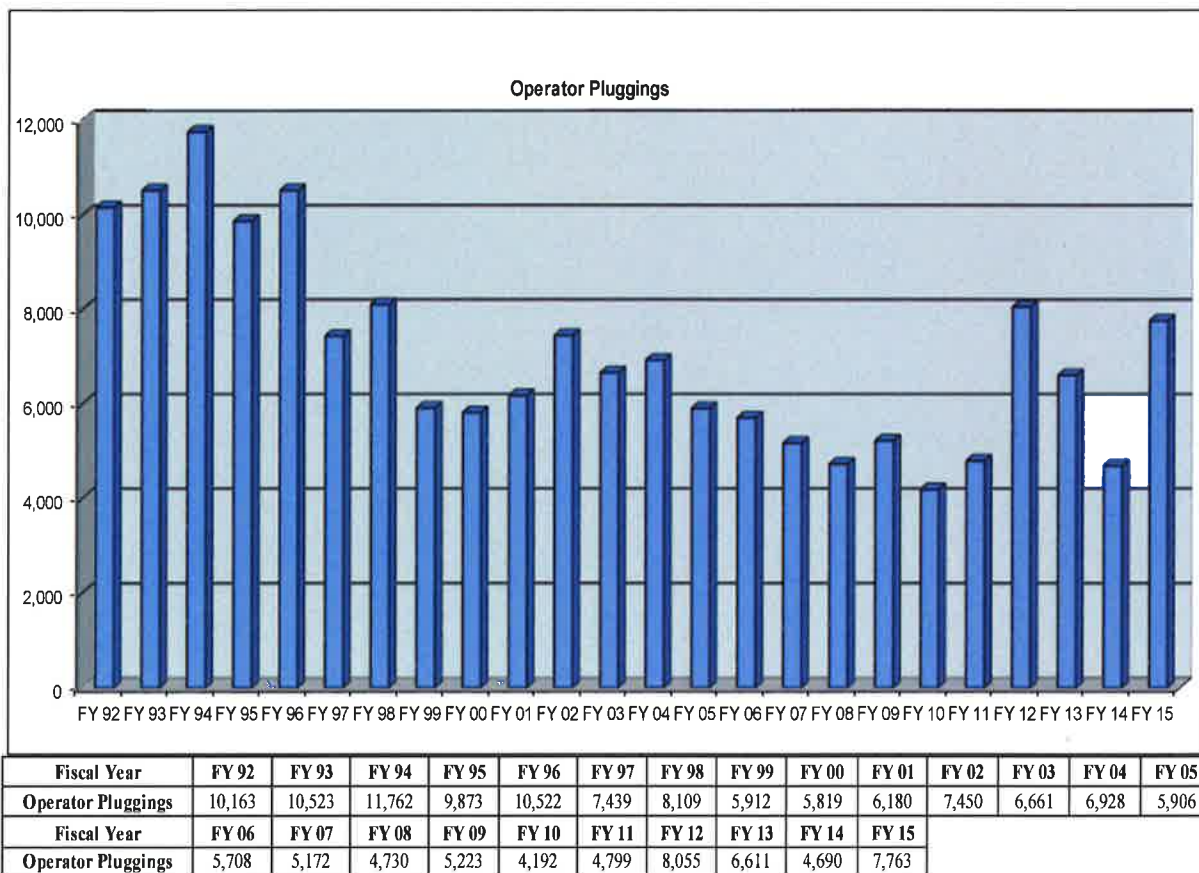


Figure 9

The Commission and industry have plugged between 4,000 and 12,000 wells per year since fiscal year 1992 (Figures 5 and 9). The number of non-compliant wells has decreased over the last five years (Figures 3 and 8). In fiscal year 2005, the number of known non-compliant inactive wells dropped below 21,000 for the first time since fiscal year 1994. Since a peak of 25,707 wells in fiscal year 2000, the number has declined to 12,155 in fiscal year 2015, a drop of 53%. It is important to note that the orphan well count is a subset of the non-compliant well count.

The decrease in the number of non-compliant wells can be attributed to several factors including the following: (1) In September 2001, the provisions of S. B. 310 required blanket bonds or letters of credit with an operator’s annual Organization Report (Form P-5) to cover the transfer of inactive wells from one operator to another; (2) In September 2004, universal bonding for all oil and gas operators became effective; and (3) the recent upturn in the oil and gas industry and sustained oil and gas prices have resulted in wells once deemed as uneconomic being returned to active production.

**IV. STATUS OF ENFORCEMENT PROCEEDINGS BY DISTRICT:**

The following information represents wells, in violation of the Commission's plugging rule, which have been referred to the Office of General Counsel--Enforcement Section and/or the Office of the Attorney General (AG) and currently are in various stages of enforcement. Table 3 displays the information by district and Table 4 by fiscal year from fiscal year 10 to 15.

<b>ENFORCEMENT PROCEEDINGS</b>	<b>1/2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5/6</b>	<b>7B</b>	<b>7C</b>	<b>8/8A</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>STATUS</b>										
<i>1. Awaiting RRC review</i>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>554</b>
<i>2. Awaiting Hearing</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>235</b>
<i>3. Awaiting Final Order</i>	<b>17</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>348</b>
<i>4. Final Order Served/Awaiting AG referral</i>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>5. Wells Referred to AG</i>	<b>56</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>236</b>
<i>Total Wells Still in Violation</i>	<b>106</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1,373</b>
<b>TIME PERIOD</b>										
<i>6. In Enforcement &lt; 2yrs</i>	<b>27</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>767</b>
<i>7. In Enforcement &gt; 2yrs &amp; &lt; 5yrs</i>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>285</b>
<i>8. In Enforcement &gt; 5yrs</i>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>85</b>
<i>Total Wells Still in Enforcement</i>	<b>50</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1,137</b>

Table 3

<b>ENFORCEMENT PROCEEDINGS</b>	<b>FY 10</b>	<b>FY 11</b>	<b>FY 12</b>	<b>FY 13</b>	<b>FY 14</b>	<b>FY 15</b>
<b>STATUS</b>						
<i>1. Awaiting RRC review</i>	766	568	715	600	335	554
<i>2. Awaiting Hearing</i>	382	496	120	461	647	235
<i>3. Awaiting Final Order</i>	138	153	88	166	155	348
<i>4. Final Order Served/Awaiting AG referral</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>5. Wells Referred to AG</i>	137	250	145	16	155	236
<b>Total Wells Still in Violation</b>	<b>1,423</b>	<b>1,467</b>	<b>1,068</b>	<b>1,373</b>	<b>1,292</b>	<b>1,373</b>
<b>TIME PERIOD</b>						
<i>6. In Enforcement &lt; 2yrs</i>	1,091	916	553	915	812	767
<i>7. In Enforcement &gt; 2yrs &amp; &lt; 5yrs</i>	193	464	323	286	259	285
<i>8. In Enforcement &gt; 5yrs</i>	0	87	47	26	66	85
<b>Total Wells Still in Enforcement</b>	<b>1,284</b>	<b>1,467</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>1,227</b>	<b>1,137</b>	<b>1,137</b>
<b>PENALTIES &amp; REIMBURSEMENTS</b>						
<i>9. Administrative Penalties Assessed by RRC</i>	\$1,161,613	\$1,317,326	\$1,965,020	\$1,287,699	\$2,364,805	\$3,250,243
<b>TOTAL PENALTIES AND REIM. PAID TO RRC &amp; AG</b>	<b>\$3,052,987</b>	<b>\$3,812,740</b>	<b>\$3,124,623</b>	<b>\$3,173,698</b>	<b>\$4,907,028</b>	<b>\$3,586,384</b>

Table 4

**V. NUMBER OF SURFACE LOCATIONS REMEDIATED BY DISTRICT:**

During the year, 1,922 abandoned oilfield sites were identified as candidates for state-managed remediation. Additional abandoned sites are identified each year through routine activities such as lease inspections, complaint investigations, state-managed plugging operations, or spill responses.

During fiscal year 2015, the Commission conducted 252 cleanup activities (Figure 10). This total includes all remediation activities invoiced by contractors that were approved and processed by the Commission before August 31, 2015. State-managed remediation activities included the following:

1. 153 routine remediation operations,
2. 44 emergency operations,
3. 52 site assessment investigations,
4. 2 pollution abatement activity
5. 1 miscellaneous activity

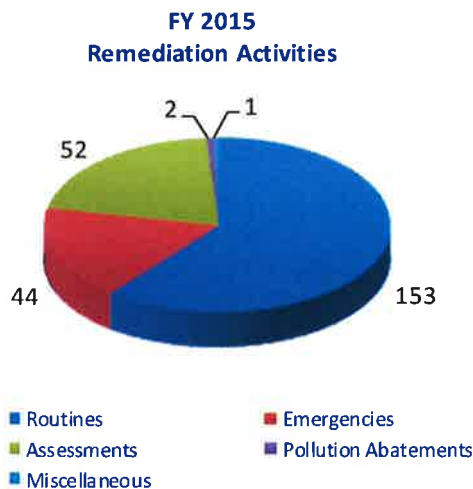


Figure 10

Figure 11 depicts these 252 activities by district for fiscal year 2015 and Figure 12 shows the sites cleaned up, assessed, or investigated by fiscal year since the inception of the program in September 1991.

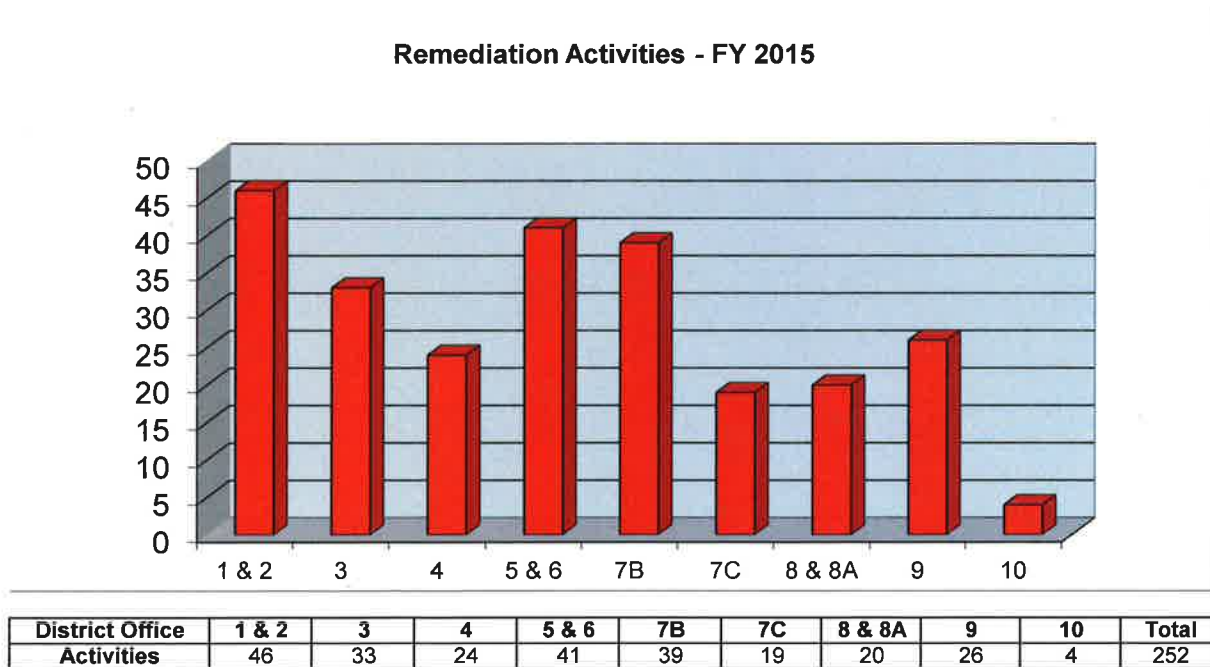
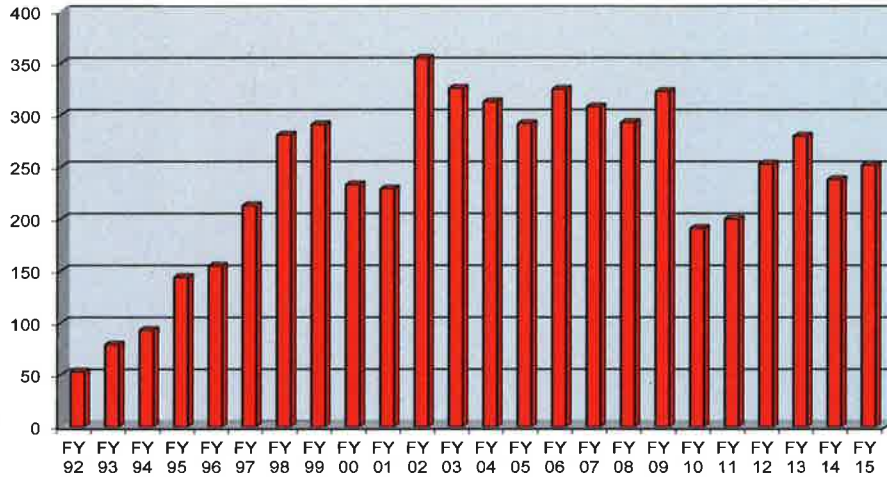


Figure 11

**Remediation Activities**



Fiscal Year	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04	FY 05	FY 06
Activities	53	79	93	144	155	213	281	291	233	229	355	326	313	292	325
Fiscal Year	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	Total					
Activities	308	293	323	191	200	253	280	238	252	5,720					

Figure 12

Similar to the well plugging priority system, the abandoned oilfield sites are prioritized based on the present or possible future impact to the environment and public safety. With larger sites, the challenge is often determining if the source of pollution is natural or man-made, which potential operator is responsible, how to evaluate the site, and which remedial method is appropriate for the situation.

The Commission utilizes environmental engineering contracts to help address complex sites. In addition to producing detailed assessment reports, the environmental contractors develop alternative remedial recommendations and anticipated costs.

**Abandoned Pit in East Texas**

Before



After



**VI. OIL AND GAS REGULATION AND CLEANUP FUND EXPENDITURES:**

The Commission began fiscal year 2015 with a beginning fund balance in the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund of \$7,242,642 and ended with a fund balance of \$12,880,452. Total revenues for the fiscal year were \$58,648,177 and total expenditures and encumbrances were \$69,585,458. Fiscal year 2015 Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund revenues and expenditures for well plugging operations, site remediation activities, and administration of the program are detailed in Table 5 and graphically displayed in Figures 13 and 14.

<b>Prior Year Cash Balance as of August 31, 2014</b>				<b>\$ 23,817,733</b>	
				Comptroller BRE	FY 2015 Collections
<b>Revenues:</b>					
Oil & Gas Well Drilling Permit			\$ 14,000,000	\$	8,574,793
P5 Organization Filing Fee			4,321,000		4,099,409
Oil and Gas Regulatory Fees			8,893,000		12,027,098
Other Revenue			11,174,000		8,879,285
<b>Sub-Total Revenue</b>			<b>\$ 38,388,000</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>33,580,585</b>
Surcharges			\$ 34,250,000	\$	25,067,591
Coastal Impact Assistance Program			-		-
<b>Total Revenues</b>			<b>\$ 72,638,000</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>58,648,177</b>
<b>Budget</b>					
<b>Expenditures &amp; Encumbrances:</b>	Original	Revised	Expenditures	Encumbrances	Total Exp & Enc
Well Plugging	\$ 18,401,266	\$ 17,209,040	\$ 13,754,728	\$ 2,428,367	\$ 16,183,095
Site Remediation	5,446,898	6,380,609	5,571,587	857,880	6,429,468
Monitoring and Inspections	18,823,040	17,823,341	19,794,440	696,821	20,491,262
Oil and Gas Permitting	9,210,282	8,738,552	9,828,019	447,603	10,275,622
GIS & Well Mapping	850,967	827,318	922,123	31,202	953,326
Public Information & Services	1,986,767	1,960,360	2,179,418	94,984	2,274,402
Administration	19,647,472	28,285,048	12,568,267	410,016	12,978,284
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 74,366,692</b>	<b>\$ 81,224,268</b>	<b>\$ 64,618,583</b>	<b>\$ 4,966,874</b>	<b>\$ 69,585,458</b>
<b>Unobligated Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund Balance - August 31, 2015</b>					<b>\$ 12,880,452</b>
<b>Personnel:</b>	Budgeted	Actual			
FTEs	578.04	534.62			

Table 5



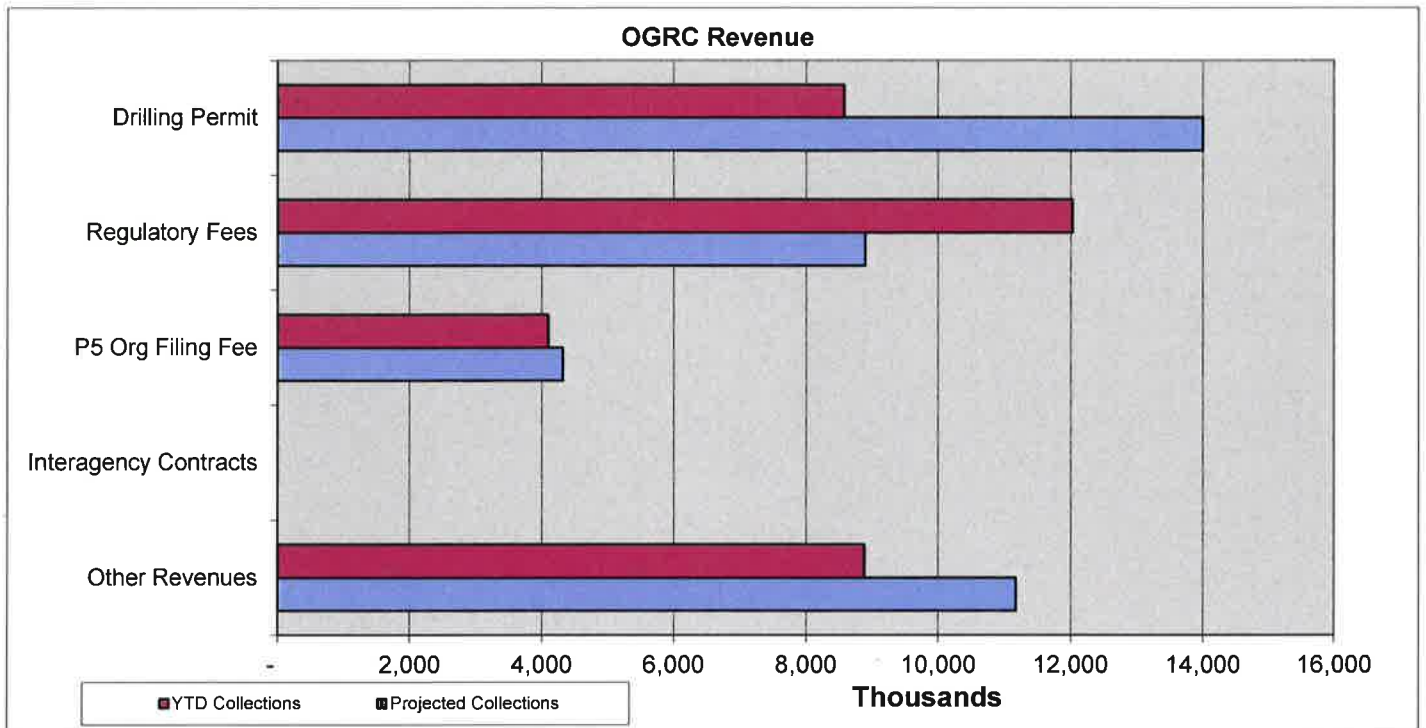


Figure 13

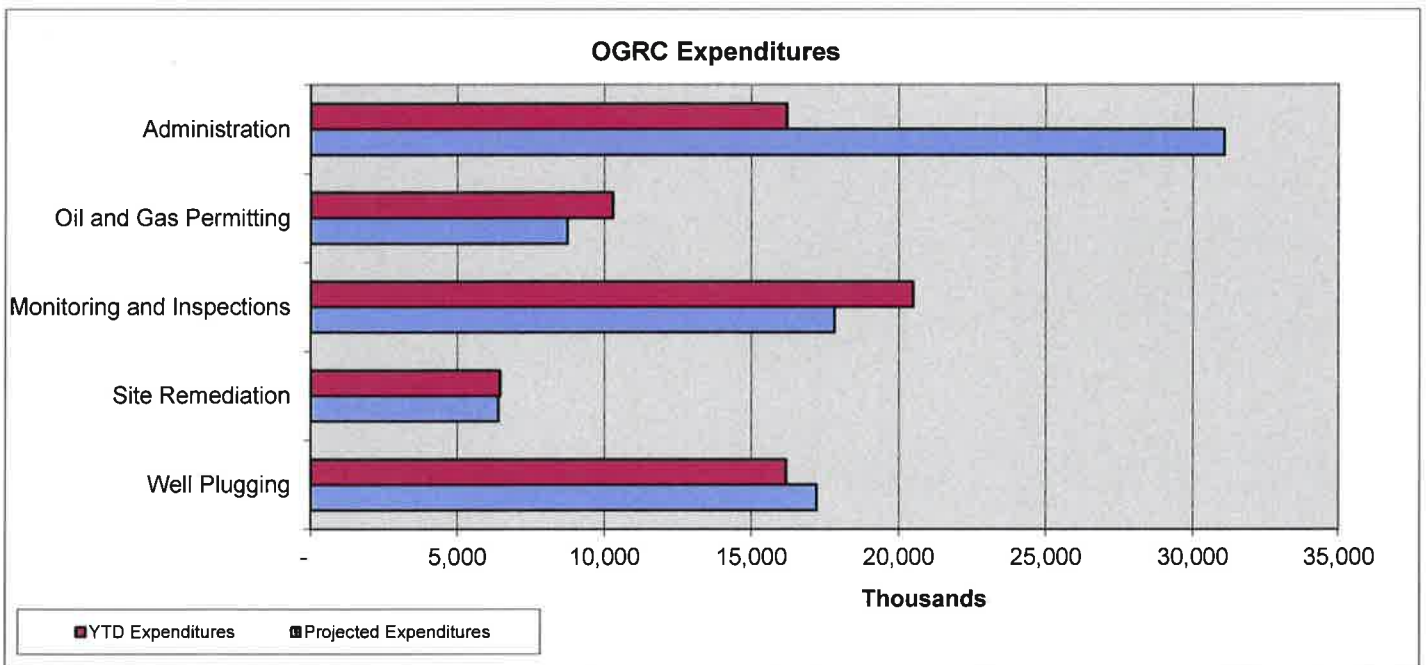
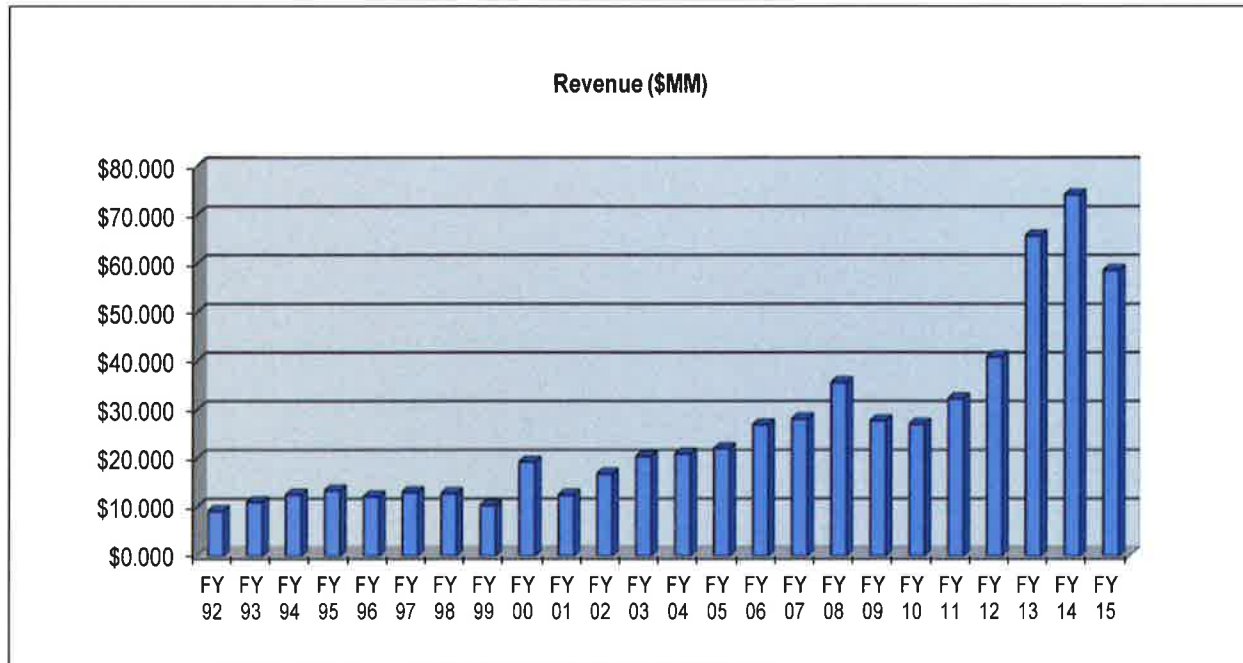


Figure 14

Figure 17 illustrates the actual revenues received into the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund. Neither the revenue projections nor the actual revenue receipts reflect revenues from federal sources.



<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>FY92</b>	<b>FY93</b>	<b>FY94</b>	<b>FY95</b>	<b>FY96</b>	<b>FY97</b>	<b>FY98</b>	<b>FY99</b>	<b>FY00</b>	<b>FY01</b>	<b>FY02</b>	<b>FY03</b>	<b>FY04</b>	<b>FY05</b>	<b>FY06</b>
<b>Revenue (\$MM)</b>	\$9.220	\$11.045	\$12.591	\$13.449	\$12.214	\$13.073	\$12.858	\$10.405	\$19.335	\$12.535	\$16.837	\$20.433	\$20.976	\$22.078	\$26.980
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>FY07</b>	<b>FY08</b>	<b>FY09</b>	<b>FY10</b>	<b>FY11</b>	<b>FY12</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>						
<b>Revenue (\$MM)</b>	\$28,165	\$35,608	\$27,766	\$27,105	\$32,302	\$40,922	\$65,771	\$74,199	\$58,650						

Figure 17

**VII. WELL PLUGGING PRIORITY SYSTEM:**

The Commission uses a priority methodology to rank wells for plugging to insure that those posing the greatest threat to public safety and the environment are plugged first. The priority system includes four factors relating to the threat a wellbore poses to public safety and the environment. The factors are titled “Well Completion”, “Wellbore Conditions”, “Well Location with respect to sensitive areas”, and “Unique Environmental, Safety, or Economic Concern.” The “**Well Completion**” factor has seven subcategories relating to the completion information on the well; type of formations penetrated, type of well, and age of the well, and has a maximum of forty (40) points. The “**Wellbore Conditions**” factor has seven subcategories relating to downhole conditions such as pressures on the well, fluid level in the well, and the mechanical integrity of the wellbore, and has a maximum of seventy-five (75) points. The “**Well Location**” factor has seven subcategories relating to the proximity to sensitive areas, and has a maximum of twenty (20) points. The remaining factor, “**Unique Environmental, Safety, or Economic Concern**” has five subcategories relating to proximity to active water floods or disposal wells, logistical concerns, wellbores with reentry problems, and the length of delinquency of the operator’s Organization Report, and has a maximum of twenty (20) points.

Only those factors, which apply, are considered. Each factor has been assigned a weight dependent on its potential to affect human health and the environment. The weights of the factors are summed to obtain a total weight. The total weight determines the priority a well receives. Wells receive a priority of 1, 2H, 2, 3, or 4, where 1 is the highest priority. The greater the total weight summed from all of the applicable factors, the higher the priority assigned. The priority system assigns leaking wells the highest priority (an automatic priority 1) and assigns an automatic priority 2 if the well fails a fluid level test. The current priority system is outlined below.

**WELL PLUGGING PRIORITY SYSTEM**

	FACTOR	WEIGHT
<b>I.</b>	<b>Well Completion</b>	
A.	Unknown (no well records)	15
B.	No surface casing or set above base of deepest usable quality water	10
C.	Additional casing string not adequately cemented to isolate usable quality water	5
D.	Injection or Disposal Well	10
E.	Well penetrates salt/corrosive water bearing formation or abnormally pressured formation	5
F.	Well in H2S Field	5
G.	Age: well drilled $\geq$ 25 years ago	5
	Total (40 max)	

<b>2. Wellbore Conditions</b>	
A. Well is pressured up at the surface (tbg or Prod csg)	10
B. Bradenhead pressure exists *	5
<b>Auto 2H if UQW not protected, and fluid at BH is not UQW</b>	
<b>C. Measured fluid level:</b>	
D. Fluid level at or above the base of deepest usable quality water.	50
E. Fluid level less than 250' below base of deepest usable quality water (na if 2D applies)	15
F. MIT failure	5
G. H-15 (MIT) never performed, or test greater than 5 years old (na if F applies)	3
H. Inadequate wellhead control/integrity	5
Total (75 max pts)	
<b>3. Well location with respect to sensitive areas</b>	
A. H2S well with Public area ROE ** <b>Automatic Priority 2H</b>	
B. In Marine Environment	10
C. Within 100' of river, lake, creek, or domestic use fresh water well (N/A if B applies)	5
D. Between 100' and ¼ mile of river, lake, creek; or domestic use fresh water well (N/A if C applies)	3
E. Located within agricultural area	2
F. Well located in known sensitive wildlife area	3
G. Well located within city or town site limits	10
Total (20 max pts)	
<b>4. Unique environmental, Safety, or Economic Concern</b>	
A. Adjacent to Active water flood or disposal well at or above completion interval.	5
B. Logistics (poor roads, encroaching public, etc)	5
C. Well Contains Junk	5
D. P-5 Delinquent > 5 years	5
E. Other (attach explanation)	1-20
Total (20 max pts)	
<b>Total Weight</b>	
<b>Priority</b>	
<b>Priority 1 = Leaking Well (Based on Definition)</b>	
<b>Priority 2H = Higher Risk well (Based on Definition and/or total weight &gt; +75)</b>	
<b>Priority 2 = Total Weight 50 - 75</b>	
<b>Priority 3 = Total Weight 25 - 49</b>	
<b>Priority 4 = Total Weight &lt; 25</b>	

\* BH Pressure is sustained.

\*\* 2H if public area could be impacted based on SWR 36 definition. Undetected/continuous leak possible.

Figures 15 and 16 and Table 6 below show the number of wells plugged with Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funds by priority during fiscal year 2015 and between fiscal years 1992 and 2015. In September 2001, the Commission began concentrating its well plugging efforts on priority 1 and 2 wells as a result of implementation of the High Risk Well Testing Program established by S.B. 310 (77<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 2001). This continued through fiscal year 2015.

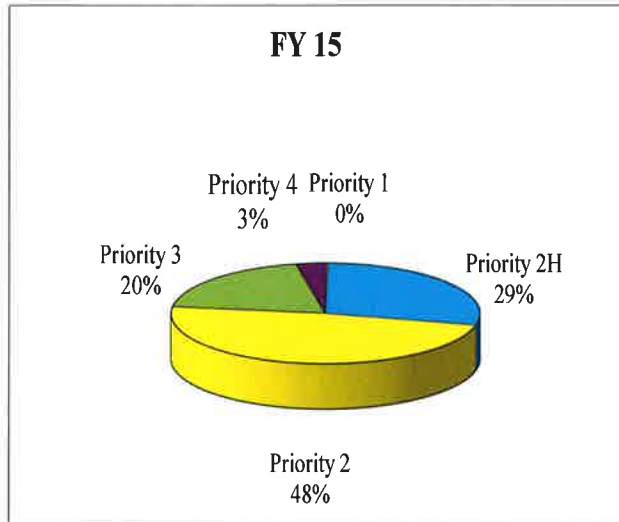


Figure 15

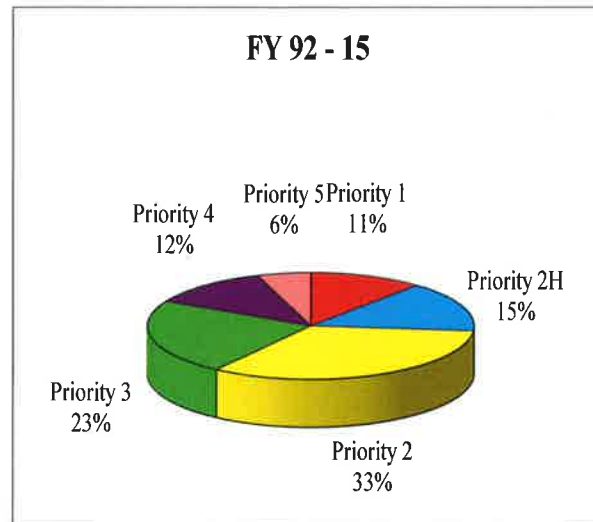


Figure 16

	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Years 1992 – 2015
Priority 1	2	3,493
Priority 2H	197	4,735
Priority 2	335	10,326
Priority 3	137	7,091
Priority 4	21	3,741
Priority 5*	0	1,651
Total	692	31,037

Table 6

\*No longer used (Priority 5 category eliminated in fiscal year 2001)

**VIII. STATUS OF SALVAGE OPERATIONS:**

The Commission continues to benefit from the sale of salvageable equipment and hydrocarbons recovered from wells/leases plugged and sites remediated with Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funds. In fiscal year 2015, the Commission derived **\$428,192** from the sale of salvageable equipment and hydrocarbons on **152** salvage operations and deposited these proceeds in the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund. The record for the sale of salvage was set in fiscal year 2006 with proceeds of \$1,637,051.

House Bill (H.B.) 2705 (73<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, 1993), which became effective January 1, 1994, streamlined the requirements and facilitated the process by which the Commission is able to sell salvageable equipment and hydrocarbons from wells plugged or sites remediated with Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funds. While the bill eased the requirements to sell salvage, it continued to provide due process protection for interested or affected parties. Potential claimants of salvage proceeds have an indefinite period of time in which to file a claim against the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund for the proceeds from the sale of salvageable equipment and/or hydrocarbons. Additionally, H.B. 2613 (78<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 2003) clearly established the Commission’s ability to also sell stored hydrocarbons from abandoned sites remediated by the Commission.

Since the inception of the salvage program, the proceeds from the sale of salvageable equipment and hydrocarbons have totaled \$17,912,127 from 4,707 salvage operations. Figure 18 illustrates the salvage proceeds from the sale of equipment and hydrocarbons from fiscal year 1994 to the present.

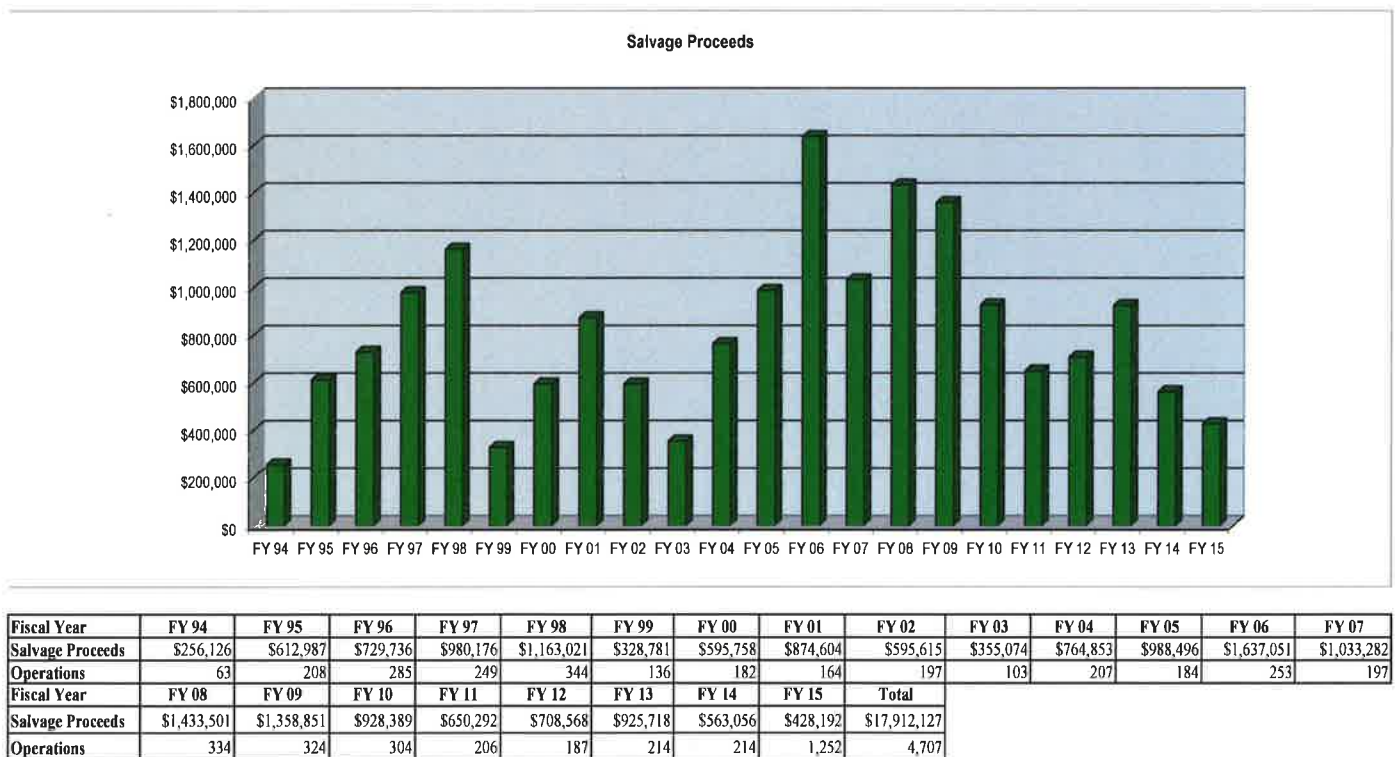


Figure 18

**IX. NUMBER OF SITES REMEDIATED UNDER THE VOLUNTARY CLEANUP PROGRAM BY DISTRICT:**

Senate Bill 310, 77<sup>th</sup> Legislature (2001), amended Texas Natural Resources Code, Chapter 91, by adding new Subchapter O, specifically authorizing the Commission to establish a Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP) that is self-funded through the collection of application and oversight fees and that these fees be deposited to the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup fund. Railroad Commission rules regarding the VCP were adopted in June 2002 (16 TAC, Chapter 4, Subchapter D). The purpose of the VCP is to provide an incentive to lenders, developers, owners, and operators to remediate soil and water that have been environmentally impacted by activities over which the Commission exercises jurisdiction. The program removes the liability to the lenders, developers, owners, and operators who did not cause or contribute to contamination by offering a release of liability. In return for the release of liability, the State offsets oversight costs through the collection of fees, reduces the need for state-managed cleanup activities, and expedites the return of contaminated properties into productive use.

S.B. 310 structured the VCP in a sequential fashion: 1) an application (with application fee of \$1,000) and acceptance process, 2) agreement execution process, 3) cleanup with Commission oversight process, and finally 4) issuance of a VCP Certificate of Completion. The Commission oversight includes review of work plans and reports to ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

Senate Bill 1, 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature (2011), amended Statewide Rule 78 as it applies to certain fees charged by the commission's Oil & Gas Division. Under Rule 78 amended, a \$1,500 surcharge is required with VCP applications submitted as of May 1, 2012.

In fiscal year 2015 there were 7 new VCP applications. As of August 31, 2015, there were 42 active VCP sites. Since program inception in the summer of FY02, 58 sites have been cleaned up and certificates of completion issued.

**X. OPERATOR CLEANUP PROGRAM:**

Another important function of the Commission's Oil Field Cleanup Program is the management of the Operator Cleanup Program (OCP). Operator cleanups are complex assessment and remediation activities conducted by a responsible operator, usually at environmentally sensitive sites. The OCP program ensures that pollution in sensitive areas as defined in SWR 91 is addressed promptly and adequately. Oversight of OCP activities is managed by the Site Remediation section staff in Austin headquarters and District Office (DO) staff. The majority of the projects are long-term remediation projects that require specialized skills to review and manage.

Importantly, environmental cleanups in this program are funded by the responsible operator. As a result, prompt review and action by the Commission may keep some of these projects from becoming state-managed projects that would need Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup funding. While these projects do not impose actual cleanup costs to the Oil and Gas Regulation and Cleanup Fund, they do require considerable staff resources, from the time they are discovered through the issuance of a "no-further-action" letter of employees who are paid out of the fund.

These projects involve frequent sampling, reporting, and evaluation to ensure final cleanup is protective of the public health, safety and the environment.

Mergers, divestitures and acquisitions existing of oil field properties, involving environmental assessments for asset valuation, have also contributed to the increasing number of projects for the Operator Cleanup Program.

As of August 31, 2015 the Commission was overseeing approximately 573 complex operator cleanups.

Figure 19 illustrates the number of sites in the Operator Cleanup program since 1998 as of the close of each fiscal year.

**Operator Cleanup Program Active Sites**

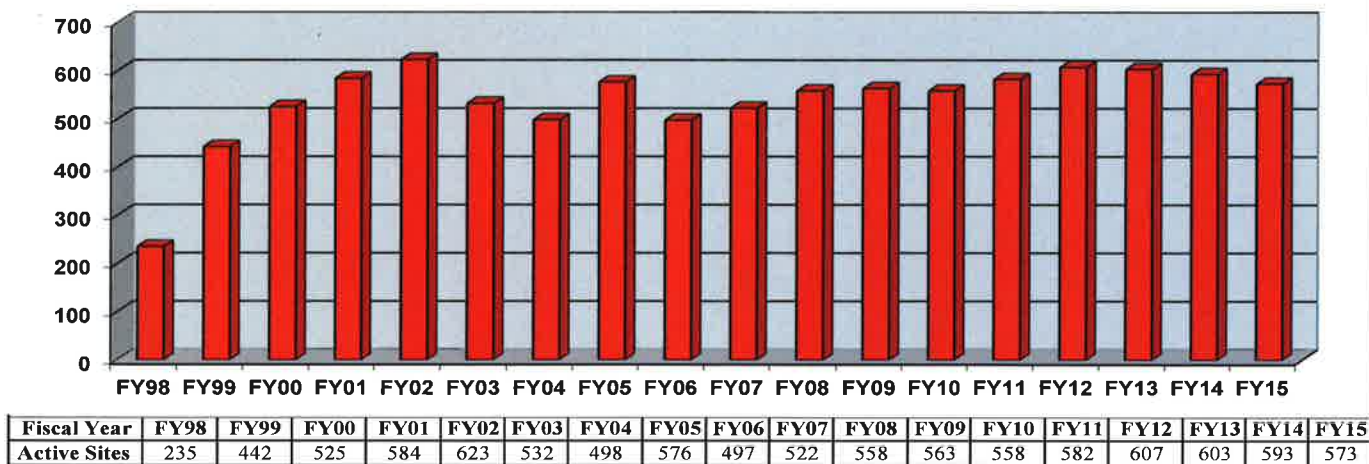


Figure 19