

OIL & GAS BOARD
5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR THE FISCAL YEARS 2022-2026
LBO NUMBER 491-00

OIL & GAS BOARD

1. Comprehensive Mission Statement:

The mission of the Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board is to foster, encourage, and promote the development, production, and utilization of the natural resources of oil and gas in the state of Mississippi; and to protect the public and private interests against the evils of waste in the production and utilization of oil and gas by prohibiting waste as herein defined; to safeguard, protect and enforce the co-equal and correlative rights of owners in a common source or pool of oil and gas to the end that each such owner in a common pool or source of supply of oil and gas may obtain his just and equitable share of production therefrom.

Further it is the duty of the Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board to make such inquiries as it may think proper to determine whether or not waste, over which it has jurisdiction, exists or is imminent and to take such action as may be reasonably necessary to enforce the provisions of Sections 53-1-1 through 53-1-47 and Sections 53-3-1 through 53-3-21, inclusive. To make suitable and adequate rules and regulations requiring the disposal of waste products such as, but not limited to mud, acids, saltwater, or any corrosive products brought to the surface from any oil, gas or condensate well in this state, to prevent seepage, overflow, or damage and injury to the topsoil or surface. To not only conserve the minerals but to conserve and protect its surface lands for agriculture, timber, and any and all other beneficial purposes. As well as protecting the public health, safety and the environment.

2. Statement of Agency Philosophy:

The Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board is committed to the promulgation and enforcement of its rules and regulations as well as the protection of the co-equal and correlative rights of all owners of interests; and to regulate the non-commercial disposal of oilfield waste in an environmentally safe manner consistent with federal and state regulations. The Board's philosophy is to adhere to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality and conduct in order to earn and maintain the confidence of the citizens, the industry and any other interested parties.

The Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board is also committed to ensuring that the natural resources of the state, and the health and safety of its citizens are protected by ensuring all wells are operated and maintained in compliance with the Conservation Statutes of the State, and the Rules and Regulations of the Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board.

3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks:

The regulation of the drilling of oil and gas wells, production and underground storage in conformance with the conservation laws of Mississippi and regulating the disposal of oil field waste in conformance with the conservation laws and EPA oversight.

To hold public hearings as mandated by law and upon examining all evidence, render decisions based on statutes and rules to protect and enforce the co-equal and correlative rights of all parties of interests; to maintain accurate and precise records for state and public use as required by law; to issue all permits relating to the drilling, production, underground storage and operation of oil or gas wells. As promulgated under the Safe Drinking Water Act to function as the primary authority of the EPA delegated Class II Injection Well Program to ensure the proper permitting, operating, plugging and abandoning of all Class II Injection Wells in the State.

To address non-compliance issues in a timely manner, assessing civil penalties and/or orphaning wells as needed in order to avoid any potential harm to the environment and the public health and safety.

4. Overview of the Agency 5-Year Strategic Plan:

Three activity areas are planned for the next five years. The Board continues to oversee the storage of manufactured CO₂. Authority was granted to the Agency in the 2011 Legislative Session. Pursuant to Senate Bill 2723 (2011), the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and the Mississippi Oil and Gas Board oversees and monitors Class VI wells and geologic carbon dioxide sequestration. The Oil & Gas Board will also continue to plug as many orphaned oil/gas wells as reasonably possible each year.

In its regulatory function, the Oil & Gas Board requires well operators to submit various forms documenting the records of each well which are made available for public review and research. Enhanced development of a web based reporting system for the filing of these forms will further enhance the processing and review activities of these important records. Better access to these public records will bring about increased research for the development of the oil and gas resources of the State of Mississippi.

The Oil & Gas Board will continue to plug orphan wells as they are designated by the Board. It is difficult to predict the number of wells that will be orphaned each year as there are many factors that may contribute to an operator abandoning the well(s). The plugging of an orphan well is necessary to assure the protection of our ground water resources from the well bores that have penetrated through the fresh water zones.

During FY 2019, eleven (11) wells were orphaned and then plugged by the Board. During FY 2020 the agency contracted for the plugging of 18 “orphaned” wells. Funds were requested from the Capital Expense Fund for this purpose. Due to various weather-related factors to include a high amount of rainfall, the agency was only able to plug fourteen of these wells at a cost of \$507,145.00. Our Agency has already identified another eight (8) orphaned wells and the will seek requests for bids for the plugging of these wells in the upcoming fiscal year. It is likely that numerous other wells will be orphaned in the future and the Oil & Gas Board will address the plugging of these orphaned wells as the need arises.

At this time, there are no existing drilling or producing oil/gas wells offshore in the State waters of Mississippi. Since 1952 there have only been five exploratory wells drilled offshore in Mississippi waters and all were plugged as non-productive. The regulation and inspection of offshore exploration and production activities is more complex than onshore activities. In the event that offshore exploration increases, staff training and work load will increase to assure that offshore drilling and production is conducted in a manner in which the State of Mississippi will benefit from its oil and gas resources while providing protection to other natural resources of the State. As offshore drilling and production increases, so will the Oil & Gas Board's regulatory activity.

The Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board continues to have an immediate need to hire a Petroleum Engineer. State Statute 53-1-9 provides that it is the duty of the Supervisor to employ a Petroleum Engineer; however recent attempts to fill this position have been unsuccessful; we believe that this is due to the low salary being offered. A Petroleum Engineer is necessary to advise the Board in matters related to the recovery of the natural resources of the State and to protect against waste, to protect the coequal and correlative rights of the mineral owners in the State as well as protect the USDW (Underground Source Drinking Water).

The salary for an Engineer Adv (Chief), Petroleum with the State is \$58,948.58 - \$103,160.01. The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2019 quoted the median salary for a Petroleum Engineer at \$137,720.00. The Occupational Employment Wages, May 2017 estimates wages for this occupation begin at \$79,270.00 and ranges up to \$193,430.00. The Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board believes that in order to recruit an experienced and qualified Petroleum Engineer, the agency must be able to offer a more competitive salary range of \$74,000.00 – \$135,000.00. It is our goal and a critical need to hire a qualified, experienced individual to fill the role of Petroleum Engineer within our agency.

The staff of the Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board is comprised of dedicated individuals who are committed to the agency and ensuring all interested parties are treated fairly and respectfully. Staff has shown a willingness to take on extra duties and have gone out of their way to assist in areas where needed. Like many state agencies, the Mississippi State Oil & Gas Board has a number of staff members who will soon be eligible to retire either with years of service or upon attaining age 60. These individuals possess a great deal of industry knowledge specific to the agency and to lose this knowledge would be detrimental to the agency and our ability to effectively and efficiently provide a vital service to the State of Mississippi. We strive to cross-train various individuals within the agency so that in the event of retirements or turnover, our staff is well-rounded and able to fill any and all vacancies with experienced and knowledgeable staff members. By doing so, it is our goal to further ensure that our agency always provides a consistent and high quality service.

5. External/Internal Assessment:

The economic conditions of the industry with which this agency is charged by statute to regulate remains volatile, complex and cyclical bringing about great difficulty in determining the budgetary demands in the future. Oil and gas well operators in Mississippi can be classified as Independent Oil & Gas Companies. The Major Oil & Gas Companies in the United States of America do not operate wells in Mississippi. Therefore, the price of a barrel of oil and a cubic foot of gas greatly affects the Independent Companies operating in Mississippi.

Any increase of activities in Mississippi offshore waters will be contingent upon the economics of oil and gas discoveries and production.

The Federal EPA Grant is designed to help the State to implement the UIC Program. Current responsibility in the State of Mississippi for the approval and control of all underground injection wells utilized for saltwater disposal, hydrocarbon storage, and enhanced recovery of oil and gas is vested in the Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board. Program development from both a field and an office perspective has continued to improve in the reporting and coordination with EPA Region IV to insure that the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the amended Memorandum of Agreement and the previously negotiated Enforcement Agreement are fully met. The UIC Technical Coordinator is responsible for reviewing all new regulations, rules and MOA's for acceptance or modification, and is responsible for administering permit requirements, preparing work plans and providing other reports as required by EPA's Strategic Planning and Management Systems.

5.1 Operators and their investors are still willing to spend money on costly exploration. However, volatility and low prices in oil and gas impacts the number of permits issued by the agency. Lower prices also affect the number of dockets before the Board as a large part of the Docket usually involves requests for the drilling of new wells in the state. Lower oil and/or gas prices may also impact field operations. There is the possibility of smaller independent operators not having the resources to maintain their current wells when prices are low. This may lead to abandonment of wells, or wells not being properly maintained and the Board issuing a Show Cause Order for being out of compliance with agency rules and regulations and these wells being orphaned by the Board.

During the FY 2019 Legislative Session, House Bill 740 was passed which returned the Mississippi State Oil & Gas Board to a Special Fund Agency. This bill effectively allowed the Board to reinstate and once again continue depositing money into the agency's Oil and Gas Conservation Fund and the Emergency Plugging Fund. The Board received an additional General Fund appropriation for FY 2020 which will provide the agency an opportunity to collect and accrue operating capital by the collection of permitting fees, fines, etc. The Mississippi State Oil & Gas Board always endeavors to remain a good steward of its operating funds, and is committed to remaining so in the future. While it is the goal of the Mississippi State Oil & Gas Board to once again operate exclusively on industry-generated funds, due to various industry-related economic factors, it is not known at this time if additional General Fund appropriations will be needed in the future.

5.2 Through the process of monthly meetings the Board hears matters related to Mississippi's Conservation Statutes and the Rules and Regulations of the Board to ensure the interests of the state and its citizens are served. Management policies are in place to address the deficiencies in the process. The Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board has a data management system called RBDMS (Risk Based Data Management System) developed under the aegis of the Groundwater Protection Council (GWPC). This system is used to track all permits, inspections and other activities associated with the drilling and regulating of oil and gas wells in the state. The agency has scanned most historical paper copies of the well files that we have in-house and is in the process of securing additional software which will allow the agency to scan and make accessible to the public, operators and any interested parties docket information and production reports. It is likely that the agency will need to secure additional staff in the future with the specific dedicated purpose of scanning well files and other documents into an online database.

6.1 Agency Program Goals:

To foster, encourage, and promote permitting, drilling and production by enforcing the Board's Rules and Regulations. To utilize the natural resources of oil and gas in the State of Mississippi; prohibit waste, to enforce the oil and gas conservation statues of this state as enacted by the Mississippi Legislature, as well as the Rules, Regulations, orders and/or policies of the Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board and protect the natural resources of the state, the environment and the health and safety of its citizens.

6.2 Program Goal Objectives:

OBJECTIVE A.1. To regulate all on-shore permitting, drilling and production in the state.

Outcome: Protection of the environment of our state.

A.1.1. Strategy: Oversee and supervise this agency's field inspectors whose function it is to regularly inspect oil and gas wells and related facilities.

Output: Periodic update on numbers for drilling and production in the state.

Efficiency: Number of inspections

Explanatory: Protection of underground source of drinking water (USDW)

OBJECTIVE A.2. Process all dockets received

Outcome: Protection of the environment of our state

A.2.1. Strategy: Oversee and supervise the daily operations of the office personnel.

Output: Periodic update on numbers for drilling, permitting and production in the state.

Efficiency: Number of dockets

OBJECTIVE A.3. Issue permits for all wells according to State Statutes, Rules and Regulations and Board Orders.

Outcome: Protection of the environment of our state

A.3.1. Strategy: Oversee and supervise the daily operations of the office personnel.

Output: Periodic update on numbers for drilling, permitting and production in the state.

Efficiency: Number of permits

OBJECTIVE A.4. Process all requests for copies of information in a timely manner and maintain accurate and precise records for public use.

Outcome: Protection of the environment of the state.

Outcome: Maintain accuracy of Production Records

Outcome: Maintain accuracy of field maps

A.4.1. Strategy: Oversee and supervise the daily operations of the office personnel.

Output: Periodic update on numbers for drilling and production in the state.

Efficiency: Ensure integrity of records

Explanatory: Promote exploration; information for new operators and public

OBJECTIVE A.5. Plugging and abandoning of orphan wells.

Outcome: Protection of the environment of the state.

A.7.1 Strategy: Board Order designating well(s) as Orphan well(s), after notice and hearing.

Output: Number of Orphan wells plugged

Efficiency: Cost of plugging Orphan wells

Explanatory: Protection of underground source of drinking water (USDW)