



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE TRUST LANDS
RESOLUTION 2026-04**

ORPHANED WELLS

Whereas, the member states of the National Association of State Trust Lands (“NASTL”) are collectively the second largest landowner in the United States and manage trust lands, minerals, and waterways through their respective states;

Whereas, members of NASTL have congressional and state constitutional mandates to manage millions of acres of lands for the multi-generational benefit of trust beneficiaries, including public education, through economic development, conservation, recreation, and other trust and public purposes as provided by their respective mandates;

Whereas, hundreds of thousands of documented and undocumented orphaned oil and gas wells exist on federal, state, private, and tribal lands, with significant concentrations in the Western United States;

Whereas, orphaned wells can release or emit large volumes of oil, other fluids, and natural gases such as methane, creating risks public health, safety, and the environment;

Whereas, additional undocumented orphaned wells on state trust lands pose further potential environmental and health risks to trust assets and the public;

Whereas, plugging orphaned wells provides substantial environmental and public health benefits, including preventing contamination of water, air, and soil, and reducing releases of hazardous gases and the migration of dangerous fluids;

Whereas, the cost to plug one orphaned well can range from \$50,000 to \$120,000, depending on the depth, location, and condition of the well;

Whereas, Congress provided funding for plugging, remediating, and reclaiming orphaned wells on state, private, tribal, and federal lands through the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act; and

Whereas, NASTL member states have developed state programs that provide additional financial support for orphaned wells cleanup,

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BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. NASTL commends Congress for enacting bipartisan legislation supporting the plugging, remediation, and reclaiming of orphaned wells on state trust lands, private lands, tribal lands, and federal lands; and,
2. NASTL urges Congress to continue providing annual appropriations necessary to sustain these cleanup efforts; and,
3. NASTL further urges the federal government to coordinate closely with states to ensure that federal regulations and funding support – rather than hinder – existing state-led efforts to plug, remediate, and reclaim orphaned wells.

Adopted this 14th day of July, 2026.



Kris Hess, President, NASTL



Joseph Heringer, Secretary, NASTL

*This Resolution will remain in effect through July 31, 2028
unless otherwise terminated, amended, or replaced by the Association.*