

## **Idle Well Review Process Description**

### **A. Process Scope.**

1. Wells located on leases that have an approved BLM suspension of operations and/or production are not included in idle well reviews.
2. If a well is no longer physically or mechanically capable of production in paying quantities, BLM must determine if the well has a future beneficial use.
3. Operators sometimes do not understand or do not agree with the BLM's definition of a shut-in and/or temporarily abandoned well. However, the well status definitions on Attachment 1 is our policy and shall be used.

### **B. Idle Well Review process starts when a well has not produced for an extended period of time as determined by the Authorized Officer (AO) (for example, 12 months). BLM identifies idle wells through the following actions.**

1. Generate an AFMSS zero production report (using the Monthly Report of Operations) or MRO/AFMSS Well Status Comparison Report for 12-months or longer.
2. Perform field inspections on wells identified in a report (zero production, well status, or other report) or found as a result of a field inspection.

### **C. BLM determines if the available well information supports the identified well status.**

1. If the reported or observed information supports the status, update the well status and the well status date in AFMSS. Utilize the AFMSS well remarks capability to document the reason why the inactive/TA well status is appropriate. Perform subsequent reviews, as necessary.
2. If the information does not support the reported status, go on to Step D.

### **D. Notify the operator to submit plans to do one of the following actions within a specified timeframe (Normally 30-60 days.).**

1. Bring the well back on production;
2. Recomplete the well in a different interval (Notice of Intent to Recomplete);
3. Convert the well to beneficial use (Approved service or water well);
4. Request SI well status after a positive well test demonstrates that the well is physically and mechanically capable of production in paying quantities, and provide very strong justification why the well is not producing;
5. Request TA well status designation with sufficient justification for future well use (TA well status approval should include a requirement to perform periodic mechanical integrity tests. BLM must be judicious in the TA well status approval.); or
6. Plug and abandon the well.

**E. The BLM reviews the operator's plans and either approves or denies the plans. The AO determines, on a case-by-case basis, what must be addressed in each plan.**

1. When the operator proposes to perform one of the six actions outlined in Step D. to the satisfaction of the AO, the plan and any corresponding sundry notice are conditioned and approved with subsequent follow-up and review.
2. Unresponsive operators will require additional follow-up in the form of subsequent correspondence and meetings, if possible. If an operator continues to be unresponsive, enforcement actions in accordance with 43 CFR, Subpart 3163, must be taken, as necessary.

**F. BLM monitors the operator performance in accomplishing the approved plans.**

1. If the operator performs the actions as approved, the idle well case is resolved. BLM will perform subsequent reviews to verify an accurate future well status.
  - a. Subsequent reviews of wells approved for temporary abandonment status and wells accepted for long-term shut-in must include further evaluation of the technical feasibility and justification. The condition of each well must be discussed with the operator and meet all the requirements for the designated well status.
  - b. BLM must continually update paying well determinations (SI wells) and review the validity of the justification supporting a TA well status. In accordance with regulation, approval for TA status shall not exceed 12 months at any one time.

**G. BLM actions taken when an operator is determined to be in noncompliance with the regulations.**

If an operator does not comply with the regulations and approvals, or is nonresponsive, enforcement actions in accordance with **43 CFR, Subpart 3163**, shall be taken, as necessary.

**H. Lease Termination or Cancellation.**

1. A Federal lease in its extended term because of production will terminate if it no longer contains a well that is physically and mechanically capable of production in paying quantities. Once it is determined that the lease does not meet these requirements, the operator and lease interest holders are provided a 60-day period to commence operations to restore production in paying quantities (**43 CFR 3107.2-2**). Refer to Manual Section 3107 for more information.
2. For Indian leases refer to the specific lease terms and coordinate with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

**I. Other Actions.**

1. After all other remedies have failed, BLM may litigate the case in Federal Court to effect compliance.