

Call to Action: "Get Caught Doing Good"

Perception is reality. While not necessarily the truth, it is oftentimes a narrative spun by forces outside our control. Recently, much of the narrative spun around the oil and gas industry is largely negative - the dangers of hydraulic fracturing, gas migration, drinking water contamination, etc. These issues, while of grave concern, result in incidents that are actually few and far between. To ask the average citizen outside of the oil and gas producing regions, you would think we could light our rivers and streams ablaze from toxic oil slicks and gas vapors polluting them. This is certainly not the reality.

It is time to try to control some of the narrative that creates the public's perception of the reality of the conventional oil and gas industry of Pennsylvania. How do we do that? **Get Caught Doing Good.** As conventional producers of oil and natural gas in this historic industry, let's make this our goal. Let's make this our call to action. How do we "Get Caught Doing Good?" Currently, we do it every day when we use best practices in safety for our employees and the environment. But there is a way to take it a step above and beyond the everyday.

There are tens of thousands of orphan wells in Pennsylvania and not nearly enough resources to plug them all. The newly formed Pennsylvania Grade Crude Development Advisory Council is looking into ways of incentivizing well plugging through both legislation and grant funding. Even if these measures are successful, it will not be enough. However, volunteers from our conventional industry can help make a difference and, perhaps in doing so, help change the narrative that shapes the public's perception of the industry.

Why should we volunteer? The orphan wells are not, technically, our problem. We didn't drill them, nor did we profit from them. Maybe everyone who has ever enjoyed a home heated from natural gas or fuel oil or a vehicle powered by gasoline or diesel should pay their fair share of the plugging costs?

The simple reason to volunteer comes down to this: "community ownership". These are our communities. We live here, play here, and raise our children here. We have the expertise, equipment and ingenuity to help solve this major problem facing our State. The well you choose to plug may be one of your own, your neighbor's, or the State's property. The well you volunteer to plug today is a solution to tomorrow's problem.

The DEP wants to be a cooperative partner in this volunteer effort. Two volunteer projects in the spirit of this cooperation have already been completed with more on their way. Also, if you don't mind a little paperwork, you can even apply for coverage under the State's "Good Samaritan Act", which frees you from any liability associated with the well after it has been plugged.

If you are interested in volunteering your expertise, but are concerned that you may not have the resources to join this effort, for a \$100 application fee you can submit a plugging project grant proposal under the Commonwealth Financing Authority's "Orphan and Abandoned Well Plugging (OAWP)" program. Each year, the Commonwealth Financing Authority awards millions of dollars in grant funding for various programs. Although highly competitive, well plugging grants for up to \$250,000 per project are considered.

"Getting Caught Doing Good" is about "doing good" for ourselves, our communities, our state, and our industry. Let's change the outside perception of our industry so others can see the reality - that we are good stewards for the communities we work and live in, and we care for that which has cared for us.

