

3.6.8 Abandonment of Onshore Infrastructure

3.6.8.1 Infrastructure Related to Recovery of Offshore Oil and Gas

Abandonment of onshore infrastructure entails permanent cessation of an entire land use or an independent business function of a land use. Several tasks to reclaim sites follow abandonment. Facilities are dismantled and removed from the site, while inter-facility gathering and transmission pipelines may either be abandoned in-place or removed. Some facilities (e.g., water tanks) and other improvements (e.g., roads) may be permitted at the site for future use. Any contamination of soils and water is remedied and the host site is returned to natural conditions or reclaimed to accommodate any approved future use of the site.

Historically, the County has experienced mixed results with regard to the timely demolition of facilities and reclamation of oil and gas sites following the abandonment of use. Some operators have diligently closed sites within 3-5 years following abandonment, while others have delayed commencement of site closure for unreasonably long periods (10-26 years). Other experience indicates that remediation of contamination may lag several years behind initial dismantling and removal of surface facilities.

Whereas

The County seeks to encourage, by way of a formal public process, the timely removal of facilities and appropriate reclamation of host sites following permanent cessation of an oil, gas, or oil/gas operation in the coastal zone.

Policy 6-30: Oil and gas facilities shall be dismantled and removed, and their host sites cleaned of contamination and reclaimed to natural conditions, or conditions to accommodate reasonably foreseeable development, in an orderly and timely manner that avoids long-term impacts to the health, safety, and welfare of the public and environment.

Applicability

Policy 6-30 applies to all onshore land uses that are, or at one time were, wholly or partially dedicated to the production, processing, storage, and transportation of oil or gas derived from offshore reservoirs.

Implementing Procedures

- (a) The County shall establish a process in its Coastal and Inland Zoning Codes for determining if, based on reasonable evidence, permitted land uses or independent business functions thereof have discontinued operations permanently. The County shall also establish a discretionary process to permit the removal, retention, or abandonment in-place of facilities, structures, and improvements associated with permitted land uses determined to be abandoned, and to reclaim host sites to natural conditions, or other conditions, in compliance with applicable laws and permits.

This permit shall be independent of any development permits associated with future use of the land, but may be processed concurrently with development permits.

- (b) Permittees shall obtain all applicable permits to remove (or retain) facilities, structures, and other improvements, and reclaim the host site upon the intentional abandonment of operations of a permitted land use. Otherwise, the permittee shall obtain either County approval to defer abandonment or all applicable permits to remove facilities and reclaim host sites under the following circumstances:
 - (1) Any event designated in an existing County permit that would require consideration of abandonment; or
 - (2) The permitted land use has become idled.
- (c) Long-term salvage operations, recycling facilities, or junkyards shall not be considered ancillary to permitted land uses. For the purpose of this procedure, “long-term” shall be a period of 2 or more consecutive years. Permittees who desire to operate long-term salvage or recycling operations at an oil/gas site shall first obtain the appropriate permits to do so, and such permits shall be issued independent of the oil/gas operation.