

Can I Convert an Abandoned Oil or Gas Well Into a Water Well ?

The Texas Natural Resources Code (§89.011) and Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) regulations (§3.14(a)(4)) allow a landowner and the operator of an abandoned oil or gas well to file an application to convert (or “condition”) it into a water well for fresh water production. Since 2001, over 1,500 oil or gas wells have been converted to fresh water wells.

The application must be made on Form P-13, Application of Landowner to Condition an Abandoned Well for Fresh Water Production. Form P-13 documents the following information:

- The operator will properly plug the oil or gas well in accordance with RRC requirements up to the base of the usable quality water as defined by the RRC’s Groundwater Advisory Unit.
- The landowner must assume responsibility for plugging the water well and obligate himself, his heirs, successors, and assignees to complete the plugging operation.
- The landowner must also submit a copy of the permit from the Groundwater Conservation District (GCD) for the area where the well is located or must attest to the fact that:
 - There is no GCD for the area in which the well is located;
 - There is a GCD for the area where the well is located, but the GCD does not require that the well be permitted or registered; or,
 - The landowner has registered the well with the GCD for the area where the well is located.

Following RRC approval of the Form P-13 and the operator’s plugging of the oil or gas well, the landowner is required, per the Texas Occupations Code (§1901.258), to contact a licensed water well driller to complete the water well installation process. To find a licensed water well driller, consult the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation license search at <http://www.tdlr.texas.gov/LicenseSearch/> or call (800) 803-9202.

If a landowner is unsure of the oil or gas well’s status or ownership, they can call the RRC Well Mapping Department at (512) 463-6851 or consult the RRC Public GIS Viewer at <http://www.rrc.texas.gov/about-us/resource-center/research/gis-viewers/>.

References:

- A copy of Form P-13 can be found at <http://www.rrc.texas.gov/media/7946/finalp-13-92104.pdf>.
- To read the RRC’s rule regarding well plugging, go to Texas Administrative Code, Title 16, Part 1, Chapter 3, §3.14(a)(4) at [http://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tl oc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=16&pt=1&ch=3&rl=14](http://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tl oc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=16&pt=1&ch=3&rl=14).
- To read the Texas Natural Resources Code, go to Title 3, Subtitle B, Chapter 89, §89.011 at <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/NR/htm/NR.89.htm#89.011>.
- To read the Texas Occupations Code, go to Title 12, Subtitle A, Chapter 1901, Subchapter F, §1901.258 at <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us>.
- Information concerning the various GCDs can be found at www.texasgroundwater.org.
- TDLR’s Well Construction and Plugging Specifications can be found at

<http://www.tdlr.texas.gov/wwd/wwdspecs.htm>.

For additional Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) related to groundwater quantity, groundwater quality, septic systems, water wells, administrative entities, and publications, visit the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee's FAQ webpage at <http://www.tgpc.texas.gov/frequently-asked-questions-faqs/>.