

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

The Texas Natural Resources Code (Section 89.011) and Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) regulations (Section 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 freshwater production. This is essentially a transfer of liability for the well asset from the operator to the landowner who then operates the converted well as a water well.

Since 2001, over 1,500 oil or gas wells have been converted to freshwater 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. (Warning: Liability for the well is passed to landowner and this includes responsibility for any future problems related to the past oil and gas operations of that well).
- 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, or
 - 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.
- An executed copy of the Form P-13 must be filed at the County Clerk Office because the P-13 is primarily a transfer of ownership and liability of a well asset from the Operator to the Landowner.

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 <https://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, consult the [RRC Public GIS Viewer](#), or read [Help with RRC Public GIS Viewer](#)

Resources and Useful Links

- A copy of Form P-13 can be found at <https://www.rrc.texas.gov/media/ltcaukal/finalp-13-92104.pdf>
- To read the RRC's rule regarding well plugging, go to [Texas Administrative Code, Title 16, Part 1, Chapter 3, Section 3.14\(a\)\(4\)9a](#)
- To read the Texas Natural Resources Code, go to Title 3, Subtitle B, Chapter 89, Section 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, Section 1901.258 at <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/>.
- Information concerning the various GCDs can be found at <https://texasgroundwater.org/>.
- TDLR's Well Construction and Plugging Specifications can be found at <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/wwd/wwdspecs.htm>.

Other Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

To find additional FAQs visit the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee's FAQ webpage at <https://tgpc.texas.gov/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>.