

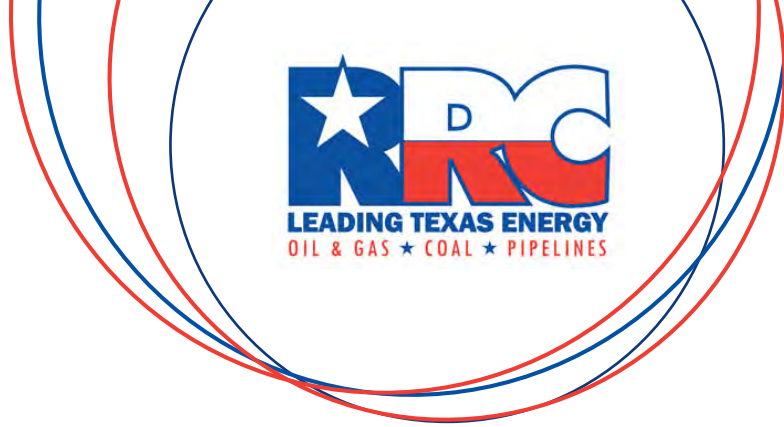


NOVEMBER 2022

Energy News



From the Field Photo
Deer in District 08, Ector County
Photo from Brian Nelson



Contents

- P. **3** Federal Award Recognizes RRC Work on Century-Old Abandoned Mine in East Texas
- P. **4** RRC’s Operator Cleanup Program Ensures Spills Are Properly Cleaned Up
- P. **6** RRC Puts 35 Years of Microfilmed Wildcat and Suspense Records Online
- P. **8** In the Field
- P. **9** Amendments to Rule on Designation of Critical Natural Gas Facilities Now in Effect
- P. **10** Critical Gas Supply Chain Facilities, Pipelines Required to File Weather Emergency Readiness Attestation
- P. **11** 2023 Pipeline Mileage Fee Due April 1
- P. **12** Oil and Gas: Did You Know?
- P. **14** Commissioners’ Corner

Upcoming Events

RRC Open Meeting December 13, 2022

[VIEW OPEN MEETING WEBCASTS ▶](#)

Federal Award Recognizes RRC Work on Century-Old Abandoned Mine in East Texas

The Railroad Commission's exemplary work protecting public safety and the environment is noticed around the country, and the agency has once again been honored with a national award for that work.

The federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, which is part of the Department of the Interior, presented RRC's Abandoned Mine Land Program with its Small Project Award in October. The award recognized exemplary work reclaiming a 100-plus-year-old abandoned lignite mine in East Texas last year.

Last fiscal year, the RRC received three national awards for injection well permitting using artificial intelligence, drone inspections and the State Managed Well Plugging Program.

The \$380,000 AML project, which was less than a half mile south of the historic courthouse in Center, Texas, addressed voids left by a hand-dug mine dating back to the 19th century.

Among the challenges of the project under the properties of two homes included a 20-foot-deep sinkhole that opened up in one of the backyards and damaged part of a fence. Extensive geotechnical work was conducted to locate voids, which were filled with cement.

Following the work underground, the fence and landscapes were repaired, as well. The project was completed in July 2021.

"We are very honored to receive this national award from our federal counterparts," said Brent Elliott, Director of RRC's Surface Mining and Reclamation Division. "Community safety is our number one priority. I'm very proud of the work our Abandoned Mine Land Program does to protect public safety. Their exemplary efforts are recognized nationwide. Time and time, the RRC team delivered the results expected by Texans."



An abandoned lignite mine was filled in by the RRC in Center in East Texas in 2021

RRC's Operator Cleanup Program Ensures Spills Are Properly Cleaned Up

In the spring of 2016, a particularly violent storm raged above the Eagle Ford Shale east of San Antonio.

A tank battery at an active well site was damaged, causing the release of about 840 barrels of crude oil into a corn field and adjacent residential neighborhood. Crude oil mixed with rainwater, and the mixture migrated through a corn field onto a county road and into culverts, roadside ditches and two retention ponds within the neighborhood.

Response actions were initiated by the operator under RRC district office oversight. However, because of the extent of the release, oversight of cleanup efforts was eventually referred to the agency's five-person Operator Cleanup Program, which oversees cleanup of such sites ensuring that the residents and the environment are protected.

"Most of the time, the sites are referred to us from the district offices," said Amanda Kindt, a toxicologist and team lead for the OCP. "There's other times when the operator voluntarily enters into the program."

The Operator Cleanup Program ensures compliance with Statewide Rules 8 on water protection and 91 on cleanup of soil contaminated by a crude oil spill.

"We have a pretty seasoned group," said Peter Pope, Manager of RRC's Site Remediation Section, which the OCP is part of. "We have dedicated staff who apply their knowledge and experience in environmental investigations to overseeing operator-led and complex-area, sensitive cleanups."

The OCP is currently overseeing about 480 active sites around the state. The group also helps district staff with some investigations, such as water well complaints.

Most cleanup sites are overseen by inspectors in district offices around the state; however, some spills are too complicated and time-consuming to oversee with district staff alone, which was the case for the site east of San Antonio impacted by a crude oil spill caused by a storm in the spring of 2016.

In that case, the operator responded immediately upon discovery of the leak, which had left oil-stained vegetation in its wake and partially flooded a converted-garage turned into an interior-living/game room with the crude oil mixture.

The operator deployed vacuum trucks to remove as much of the water and oil mixture as possible. Then the operator's

environmental contractor worked on removing oil-covered vegetation and soil and steam cleaned the surfaces of affected sidewalks, driveways, roadways, buildings and fences.

By year's end, the operator concluded the cleanup of the neighborhood, corn field and tank battery site. Sampling overseen by OCP and district office staff confirmed the successful cleanup of the impacted areas, and the OCP program issued a no-further action letter to the operator.

Contaminants at OCP sites, which can affect soil and groundwater, are cleaned up to appropriate risk-based concentrations using the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's Texas Risk Reduction Program standards.

When a program enters into the program, OCP staff, which includes geoscientists, will evaluate all aspects of a spill using their knowledge of geology to understand how it is moving through affected soil and/or groundwater, what the risks are to the public and the environment, how natural processes impact a chemical and more.

"It takes time," Pope said. "Environmental investigation is an iterative process where you have some information about the release, and you have ideas about where things might have gone, but then you got to put the holes in the ground to map all this stuff out to figure where it went. Then you need to come up with a remediation plan based upon that."

OCP staff will provide the operator with a letter describing the regulatory requirements and expectations for assessment and cleanup and may require certain monitoring to be done, such as drilling a groundwater monitoring well. The operator will provide a detailed action plan to OCP.

Before final release and a no further action letter can be provided by OCP, the operator submits a final report describing the corrective actions and final sampling performed to confirm it has been properly cleaned to appropriate risk-based standards.

Operator Cleanup Program projects throughout the state can be viewed as a data visualization:

[VIEW THE OPERATOR CLEANUP DATA VISUALIZATION](#)

RRC Puts 35 Years of Microfilmed Wildcat and Suspense Records Online

For most of its 131-year history, the Railroad Commission conducted its regulatory duties via a paper record and filing system.

That system – which was modified and tweaked from time to time – captured hundreds of thousands of records every year. Sometimes, records came in that did not fit with others or was waiting on additional paperwork before being filed or even contained an error that prevented it from being properly filed.

Records such as these went into a system referred to as Wildcat and Suspense Records, which [the RRC has now made available online](#).

For the last year or so, RRC's Central Records had 785 rolls of microfilmed suspense files containing 2.85 million images digitized. The files date from 1965 to 2000.

“Imaging this series of film ensures that online records of permits, completions and plugging from 1965 to present is much more complete,” said Matthew Herzog,

Manager of Central Records. “There is now even less of a need for someone looking for records to have to search through microfilm located only in Central Records.”

Think of the suspense files as miscellaneous records that did not have a proper home, sometimes because of the length of time between a permit being issued and a completion being recorded.

“What happened back in the day was that people noticed that sometimes there'd be permits hanging out or sometimes there'd be other reports hanging out in that filing system not connected to something else,” Herzog said. “Every few years, they'd pull those records put them on film.”

This ensured a record was properly recorded.

The digitizing of these records will be a huge boon to RRC district staff searching for information about a specific well, such as a plugging report. Instead of having to put in request for Central Records staff to manually search for information through microfilm, now those records can be easily accessed through the new online system.



The digitizing of the suspense records follows the recent completion of an effort to put all of [RRC's historic production records online](#).

A person interested in the suspense files cannot conduct a word search of the files; however, the files are ordered chronologically

by API numbers as they were recorded, meaning they are automatically grouped by county.

The online version of the Wildcat and Suspense Records includes a user guide and an index.

[VIEW THE WILDCAT AND SUSPENSE RECORDS ONLINE](#)



RRC IN THE FIELD



New RRC employees, Julia Liao, a natural resource specialist, and Abram Barker, a geoscientist, during an inspection of a 2,088-acre reclamation site at the South Hallsville No. 1 Mine.

AMENDMENTS TO RULE ON DESIGNATION OF CRITICAL NATURAL GAS FACILITIES NOW IN EFFECT

Amendments to the rule that designates certain natural gas entities as critical during an energy emergency were in effect as of Nov. 21.

RRC's commissioners on Nov. 1 adopted amendments to 16 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §3.65 relating to critical designation of natural gas infrastructure. The amendments modified the list of natural gas facilities that are critical gas suppliers and critical customers.

Gas wells producing an average of 250 Mcf/day or less and oil leases producing an average of 500 Mcf/day or less are excluded from the list of critical facilities. Certain enhanced oil recovery projects were also excluded. Facilities that are not designated critical in 16 TAC §3.65 are not subject to requirements in 16 TAC §3.66, the RRC's weatherization rule.

The amendments clarified which facilities may request an exception to critical designation and what constitutes a reasonable basis and justification for the request such that the request may be granted.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

Critical Gas Supply Chain Facilities, Pipelines Required to File Weather Emergency Readiness Attestation

Operators of gas supply chain facilities designated as critical under 16 Texas Administrative Code §3.65 and included on the electric supply chain map are required to file a weather emergency readiness attestation with the Railroad Commission by Dec. 1 of each year.

Operators of gas pipeline facilities that directly serve a natural gas electric generation facility operating solely to provide power to the electric grid for the Electric Reliability Council of Texas power region or for the ERCOT power region and an adjacent power region and are included on the electricity supply chain map are also required to file the weather emergency readiness attestation by Dec. 1.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



2023 Pipeline Mileage Fee Due April 1

Pipeline operators need to prepare for the 2023 pipeline mileage fee that is due on April 1.

The annual mileage fee is calculated using pipeline permit mapping information supplied by the operator. The miles in each permit of Group A and Group B pipelines are added together and rounded up to the nearest mile. The sum is used to calculate the annual mileage fee.

Operators will use the number of miles permitted as of Dec. 31, 2022, to calculate their 2023 pipeline mileage fee. The deadline for payment without incurring late penalties is April 1 and can be paid through the Pipeline Online Permitting System starting on Jan. 1.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



A vertical silhouette of an oil rig against a dark, cloudy sky, positioned on the left side of the page.

OIL & GAS:

Did you know?

Nearly **55 million** Americans, according to CNN, will travel this Thanksgiving by plane, train and cars and powered by refined oil and natural gas.

About **96%** of everyday items, such as soap, clothing and electronics, are made with petroleum, which is derived from oil and gas.

When you are cooking your Thanksgiving meal, including some **46 million** turkeys, give thanks to the fuel and fertilizer from the oil and gas industry that made it possible.

Every NFL game on Thanksgiving will use **24** footballs, which are made of up an outer layer of leather and an inner part made of vinyl, which is a petroleum product.

More than **25 million** viewers will likely watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on television made with plastic, powered by electricity mostly from fossil fuels and featuring floats made of polyurethane.



Thanksgiving.

*Made possible
by oil and gas.*

55 million
Americans traveling



96%
of all everyday items
come from petroleum



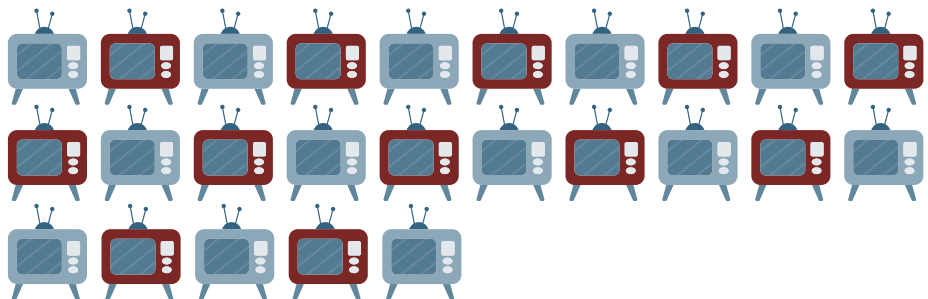
46 million
Turkey dinners



24
Footballs every game



25 million
Parade viewers



Chairman Christian

COMMISSIONERS' CORNER



Chairman Christian was successfully reelected as Railroad Commissioner! He's excited to serve a second term fighting for energy independence and the jobs, economic growth and national security that come along with it.

"We cannot allow Biden's radical agenda, based on unproven, politicized science, to take root in Texas," Chairman Christian said. "We need more domestic oil and gas production to drive down the cost of gasoline and groceries and ensure the reliability of our grid. I'll serve my constituents and the industry by ensuring a safe environment and sound regulatory process to make Texas the best place in America to live and work."

Chairman Christian also put out a [release concerning diesel fuel shortage and costs](#).

"It seems like the only use the Biden Administration has for fossil fuels is to manufacture shortages and crises that could have been avoided," Chairman Christian said. "But for the Biden Administration throwing thousands of Americans out of work by cancelling the Keystone Pipeline on Day 1 of his administration, we might have been able to avoid the shortage of diesel fuel, higher prices and damage to our economy."

Commissioner Craddick

COMMISSIONERS' CORNER



In November, Commissioner Christi Craddick continued to visit with Texans across this great state. During a trip to El Paso, Commissioner Craddick visited with students and leaders at the University of Texas El Paso on exciting developments in the energy sector. In partnership with organizations like NASA and Sandia Labs, UTEP is researching and developing exciting new tools for battery storage and hydrogen development that could revolutionize the way Texans use energy.

Additionally, Commissioner Craddick visited the Houston area and was able to tour the BP Natural Gas trading floor. This global commodity is priced on the free market and BP's trading floor allows the entire industry to trade in real time, keeping gas flowing in this state and across the world. An additional visit to Lone Star College's Woodlands Campus provided Commissioner Craddick with a deeper perspective on the important role community colleges play in reaching our workforce development goals in this state. Working in partnership with local businesses, community colleges are able to shift programming and focus quickly to keep up with an ever-changing business environment and fill gaps in the workforce as they arise.



Commissioner Wright

COMMISSIONERS' CORNER

In November, Commissioner Wright travelled to Houston where he spoke with members of the Houston Chemical Association about the important interplay between oil and gas production in Texas, the downstream refineries and end-users, and their significance to the Texas economy and future economic growth. In addition to providing an update on recent weatherization rulemaking actions at the RRC, Commissioner Wright discussed the status of Texas's Class VI primacy application for carbon capture and sequestration with the EPA, as well as efforts to update and modernize the Railroad Commission's environmental rules to ensure the future success of the oil and gas industry in Texas.

Oil & Gas Production Statistics

View monthly production totals of crude oil, condensate and total oil; and of gas well gas, casinghead gas, and total natural gas.

[VIEW CURRENT PRODUCTION STATISTICS ▶](#)

Enforcement Actions

The Commission has primary oversight and enforcement of the state's oil and gas industry and intrastate pipeline safety. View RRC's Latest Enforcement Actions here.

[VIEW LATEST ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS ▶](#)

Public GIS Viewer

The Public GIS Viewer allows users to view oil, gas and pipeline data in a map view.

[LAUNCH THE PUBLIC GIS VIEWER ▶](#)