

# Community Benefits Committee (CBC) Kickoff Meeting | August 27, 2024

## Attendees:

Charles Burd, Gas & Oil Association of West Virginia  
Autumn Crowe, West Virginia Rivers Coalition  
Tom Huber, West Virginia Royalty Owners Association  
David McMahon, Surface Owners Rights Organization  
Justin Williams, Affiliated Construction Trades  
Jason Harmon\*, Deputy Chief, Office of Oil & Gas, WVDEP

## Observers:

James Martin, Chief, Office of Oil & Gas, WVDEP  
Alana Hartman Asst. Chief, Office of Oil & Gas, WVDEP

\*CBC chairperson

## Notes

- Agenda was approved (moved & seconded & voted)
- DEP staff and CBC members introduced themselves
- JH (and later JM) expressed gratitude for those who helped to secure more funding for plugging abandoned wells

## Agenda item: MERP grant/program Overview/DEP strategy

- JH presented portions of “Methane Emissions Reduction Program for Marginal Conventional Wells” and provided the slides after the meeting.
- The funding that the CBC is working with was from the Inflation Reduction Act, through the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).
- The aim is to put people to work using these funds set aside for “marginal” assets; West Virginia has about 63,262 **MCWs (Marginal Conventional Wells)**, which are vertical wells that produce less than 90 mcf (thousand cubic feet) per day.
  - clarification - a well doesn't have to be an actively producing well to be considered marginal; consider adding “including wells that are idle” when speaking of MCWs
  - clarification - number of MCW wells that are “holding leases” is unknown
  - clarification - a MCW producing just under this maximum amount, e.g. 80 mcf, could be considered to be a “good” economic asset to some operators
- Slide 5: There are over 25,000 wells in 0-0.1 mcf/d production range, while 279 wells are making more than 50 mcf/d
- Slide 6: Over 1000 operators have 1-10 wells, and 9 operators each have more than 1000 wells, representing 45% of MCWs
- Slide 11, map: CEJST (Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool) has criteria to determine “disadvantaged communities” and that includes almost all of WV. We have to spend at least 40% of our funds in these areas. 72% of our MCWs fall within these areas
- Slides 12-14 Role of CBC and the Administrator
  - This is a ~\$38 million grant, not enough to plug every MCW
  - Administrator will be involved in community engagement, well nomination & prioritization, field oversight

- CBC Project Launch Phase - establish a forum for meaningful dialogue - landowners, mineral owners, O&G industry, laborers, environment will all be affected by the grant, so we seek their input
- CBC maintenance phase - keep tabs on our progress implementing the grant
- Slides 15-19 Well Prioritization Plan, will put packages together and will try to attract a lot of different vendors, including small companies

**Agenda item: CBC Goals and Objectives**

1. Serve as an advisory board making sure we hear your opinion and also all of the other affected voices
2. Approve the prioritization model
3. Maintenance role to ensure we're on track for our Community Benefits obligations
  - clarification - operators will need to voluntarily nominate their wells; we need to reach out to them to inform them & allay potential fears.
  - clarification - a surface owner may not nominate an orphan well, since it doesn't meet the definition of an MCW, but our new webpages include a self-nomination form to start to process of possibly accessing *state* funds for abandoned well plugging
  - clarification - a DEP inspector cannot require someone to apply for plugging nor appear that we're forcing them to apply. Many stakeholders can recommend a well - ultimately it's the operators' decision whether to nominate it.

**Agenda item: Identification of focus areas/strategies for public engagement**

- No one present at the meeting is opposed to making these meetings public
- Keep these ideas going and work on deploying them at next meeting. Think about where the meetings should be, who the people are, and how to get the people there.
  - CB's organization sends a newsletter to dues-paying members, many of which are likely operators of the smaller numbers of MCWs

**Agenda item tabled for next meeting: Workforce development**

**Action items**

- Jason will share the EOI (Expression of Interest) for the Administrator
- Jason will share the Abandoned Well Plugging website url that just went live today
- Jason will let this group know what is needed to make these meetings public
- Jason will ask you all to sign a form to document your participation so that he can release the \$200 reimbursement
- Jason will share the PowerPoint presentation slides that were used today
- Members will be prepared to suggest strategies at the next meeting for:
  - stakeholder meetings (where the meetings should be, who the people are, and how to get the people there)
  - workforce development

**Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.**

**Next meetings:**

The next meeting will be September 17, 2024, 10:00-11:30 a.m. Virtual meetings seem to be OK with everyone.

The October meeting will be October 15, 2024, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

The November meeting will likely be November 19, 2024, 1:00-2:30 p.m. (may have to coordinate with the Administrator on their availability as well)