

# Pilot for Site Reductions on Well Sites

## Information for Landowners about the Pilot Project

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas is issuing an interim directive that will enable the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) to pilot a project to help improve reclamation certificate issuance processes without compromising standards.

Through this pilot, AER will be able to issue a reclamation certificate to eligible operators certifying that the portion of a well site meets government reclamation standards. The AER will accept up to 100 applications beginning on March 20, 2024. The pilot will end on September 18, 2025.

Sites must follow applicable policy and meet regulatory requirements that are in place when the pilot is launched, including but not limited to:

- Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) completed within the last 12 months of the application submission. The Phase 1 ESA must not trigger a Phase 2 ESA.
- 2010 Reclamation Criteria, in which the vegetation and landscape assessments were completed within the last 12 months and soils assessments completed within the last three years of the application submission.
- No variances within the application are allowed.
- No contamination or suspected contamination allowed, on or off the well lease.

If the application is approved, companies will be issued a reclamation certificate for a portion of the surface lease.

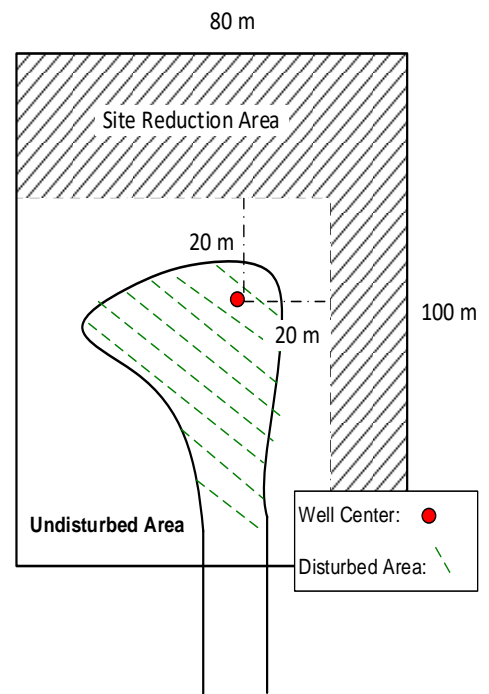
### Minimum Disturbance Lease

To be eligible, the sites must be “minimally disturbed.” Minimum disturbance sites are sites where construction practices minimize the level of soil disturbance on the lease by not stripping and stockpiling the topsoil. This is achieved by operating when the ground is frozen or dry, or by using rig matting. This practice results in two different management zones, an area where the topsoil was never stripped (undisturbed area) and an area where the topsoil was stripped and stockpiled to be replaced at closure (disturbed area). An example of a minimum disturbance site is outlined in Figure 1.

### How big can the site reduction be?

The area of surface lease may be reduced up to 60 per cent of the original surface lease if the area of the new surface lease is large enough to allow for:

- A minimum 20 metre setback from any edge of the new lease boundary to the well head (Figure 1);
- Well servicing, abandonment and decommissioning activities can be completed within this reduced area with no additional workspace required; and
- Applicable safety requirements are always met, e.g., Directive 071: Emergency Preparedness and Response; Occupational Health and Safety.



**Figure 1.** An example of partial reclamation that occurred on a minimum disturbance well lease.

## Landowner Consent and Notification

Landowners do not need to participate if they do not wish to. Landowners must be notified in writing of the pilot, which includes providing this fact sheet and the interim directive to landowners.

There are two requirements if landowners decide to participate:

- Written proof of landowner's acceptance must be acquired.
- Proof of landowner consent must be provided when an operator applies.

The landowner consent form will be posted, once available, on the Government of Alberta's website.

## Landowner Considerations for Participating

A landowner should consider the following when deciding whether to participate in the pilot:

- The Farmer's Advocate Office is available to be contacted directly with questions or concerns on participating in the pilot.
- Companies may request a review of compensation under the *Surface Rights Act* to reduce surface lease payments to landowners.
- The pilot program does not change the legal authority of surface lease agreements between landowners and operators under the *Surface Rights Act*.
- Landowners are not obligated to participate in this pilot to continue receiving compensation for their surface lease.
- An updated survey plan is required and must be provided to the landowner and AER, indicating the reduction in the well site.
- The wellhead and tear drop of land around the wellhead will remain until the remaining portion of the well site is reclaimed. This may be an impediment when farming.
- There still is a potential for adverse effects remaining from the wellhead.
- Companies may not request additional workspace. Well servicing, abandonment, and decommissioning activities must be completed within this reduced area with no additional temporary workspace.

## Landowner Feedback

The Government of Alberta will engage landowners and other affected parties at the end of the pilot to consider whether to make a policy change based on results of the pilot.

The Government of Alberta wants to hear from landowners about the pilot, including those who chose not to participate. Please send feedback to [EPA.SiteReductionPilot@gov.ab.ca](mailto:EPA.SiteReductionPilot@gov.ab.ca).

## Statement of Concern

The pilot does not change the right of a person under the *Responsible Energy Development Act* to submit a written statement of concern about a reclamation certificate application.

If you would like to submit a statement of concern, please refer to the AER's information on how to submit a statement of concern about a reclamation certificate application <https://www.aer.ca/protecting-what-matters/giving-albertans-a-voice/statement-of-concern>.

## Farmer's Advocate Office

Toll free: 310-FARM (3276) (in Alberta)  
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