Understanding Reclamation in Alberta

Site is Suspended
The site is no longer producing and is formally suspended in accordance with Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) directives.

Site is Abandoned
The well head is cut and capped. A site may remain abandoned indefinitely; there is no regulatory or legislative trigger for reclamation. The operator cannot surrender the site until a Reclamation Certificate has been obtained.

What if the operator is defunct?
In the event of insolvency, the AER will see if there are any registered working interest parties in the site. If yes, they will be responsible for reclamation. If not, the site will be forwarded to the Orphan Well Association for abandonment, remediation (if necessary) and reclamation.

When the operator decides to begin reclamation, they must start with a **Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA)**, which will provide information on the site and identify possible sources of contamination. The landowner and the occupant must be consulted at this time.

Contamination Possible

Contamination Unlikely

Phase 2 ESA: soil and groundwater sampling.

Remediation
Remediation refers to treating contaminated soil and groundwater. Some sites will use standard guidelines and values for remediation (Tier 1). If more site specific tailoring is needed, additional information is gathered and adjustments are made (Tier 2).

Reclamation is the process that returns a site to "equivalent land capability," which is the ability to support land uses as it might have prior to being utilized by industry. This includes the reclamation of the landscape, soil, and vegetation. The reclamation criteria will depend on the original year of licence.

Operator provides landowner with a copy of the Reclamation Certificate application 30 days before applying to the AER for a Reclamation Certificate and works to address landowner concerns.

Application submitted to the AER. Landowner can file a Statement of Concern (SOC) if they are not satisfied. Unresolved SOC are inspected by the AER. Landowner concerns may go through the alternative dispute resolution process at the AER.

AER May Issue Reclamation Certificate
Notice of the decision will be sent to the landowner. The operator will cease to pay the annual rental once the Reclamation Certificate has been issued.

30 Days to Appeal Reclamation Certificate

Operator remains responsible for surface reclamation for 25 years and for contamination for life.

AER will conduct random audits and respond to landowner complaints.

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