

Oil and Gas Activity: Site Restoration

How an Oil and Gas Site Becomes Green Again

The Commission considers oil and gas sites as temporary; therefore, careful planning beforehand is required to ensure a successful project end.

Operators must properly deactivate projects such as well sites, pipelines and facilities, and restore the associated land. Regulatory and legal requirements cover the restoration of oil and gas sites, and planning to reclaim a project starts early.

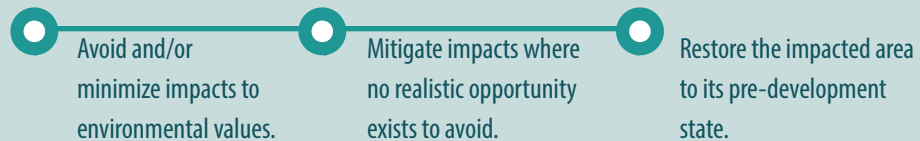
For example, companies must minimize the disturbance to nearby land before and during a drilling operation. This decreases the amount of work necessary to return the area to its original state. In addition, operators are required to remove unused equipment from an oil and gas site in a timely manner.

An operator has to achieve a Certificate of Restoration as the final step in restoring a site. This confirms all current standards and requirements have been met and any known contamination issues or hazards have been mitigated.



Reducing Environmental Impacts

The Commission's mandate is to ensure operators plan oil and gas activities to:



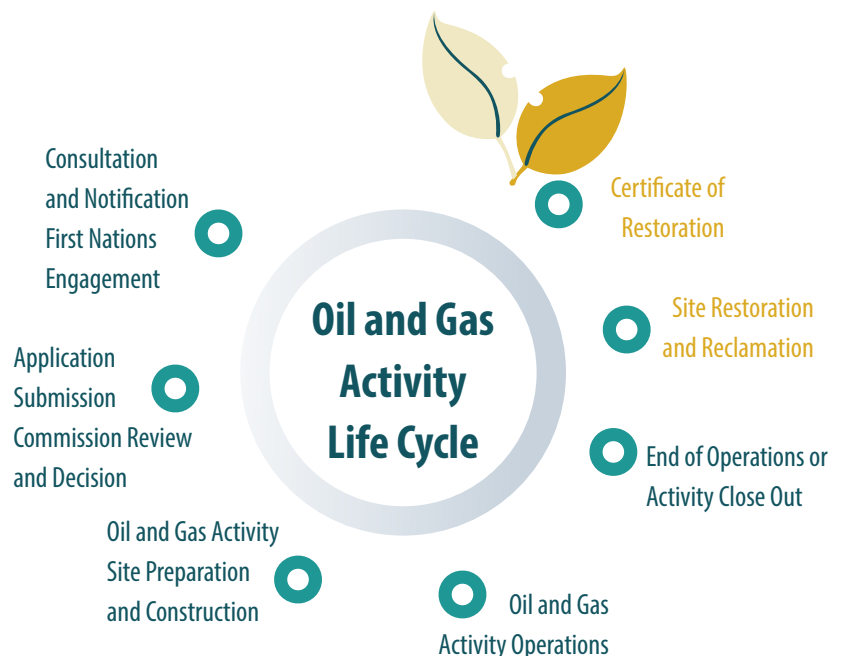
What are the Requirements?

Restoration and reclamation requirements are identified in Section 19 of the Environmental Protection and Management Regulation under OGAA. Guidance for planning and carrying out restoration and reclamation activities are available online at:

www.bcogc.ca/industry-zone/documentation.

Reclamation of ALR Land?

A preliminary reclamation plan for activity falling within the Agricultural Land Reserve is submitted at the time of application and outlines how the site will be restored once it is no longer required for the oil and gas activity. It must include land-use objectives, soil handling and re-vegetation plans.



For Further Information

Email ogc.communications@bcogc.ca or call 250-794-5200

24 Hour Incident Reporting for Industry 1-800-663-3456

This information is published by the BC Oil and Gas Commission and available online at www.bcogc.ca

How Do We Proactively Regulate?

The Commission has the legislative authority to make decisions on proposed oil and gas activities. While the Commission does not set policy, the diverse expertise and experience of Commission staff provides critical insight at every level of oil and gas development. This knowledge base provides perspective through scientific evidence, guidance, best practices, reports, tools and analysis.

Companies looking to explore, develop, produce, and market oil and gas resources in B.C. must apply to the Commission. The Commission reviews, assesses and makes decisions on these applications. This consolidated single-window authority provides not only a one-stop place for all oil and gas and associated activity requirements, but a consistent application, decision, regulatory and compliance authority. Stakeholders work with one agency; therefore, the Commission serves the public interest by having an all-encompassing review process for oil and gas activities.

What is New at the Commission?

- ✓ **Area-based Analysis** was incorporated into the permitting review process and operators must show how projects minimize disturbance where possible while reducing the footprint of activities and shortening restoration/reclamation time frames on specific resource values.
- ✓ Commission staff are designated as **Regional Water Managers and Assistant Regional Water Managers**, which provides authority to review water licences and approve, when appropriate.
- ✓ The **Water Sustainability Act** came into effect in 2016 resulting in changes to surface water and groundwater allocation processes.
- ✓ The Commission developed an electronic submission process for all oil and gas activity permit applications. The **Application Management System (AMS)** transformed paper processing of multiple applications into a streamlined online process.

What is the CoR Process?



The Certificate of Restoration (CoR) process ensures land used for oil and gas development is restored to a safe and productive condition.

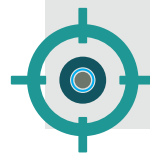
The application for a Certificate of Restoration is a two-stage process.

- Part I requires the operator to complete a professional environmental assessment and, if necessary, address potential contamination issues.
- Part II requires professional assessment of the surface reclamation to ensure site productivity has been adequately restored.

The process places the responsibility on the operator to provide a report from a professional to review all documentation and assess for potential contamination. Most sites require some level of physical site investigation (soil and/or groundwater).

To ensure operators have the financial means to restore a site the Commission has a **Liability Management Rating Program**, wherein operators with insufficient assets are required to submit a deposit prior to being allowed to operate.

However, there are rare occurrences where a permit holder for an existing site is insolvent or cannot be identified. These sites can be designated by the Commission as Orphan Sites.



What is the Orphan Site Reclamation Fund?

Once designated an Orphan Site, the Commission may use the Orphan Site Reclamation Fund (OSRF) to decommission and restore the site to obtain a CoR. The OSRF is a levy on oil and gas production paid by industry that protects taxpayers from paying for restoration liability.

If you are a land owner with a designated orphaned site on your property, more detailed information can be found on our website in the [Land Owners and Compensation](#) section.