

Alaska Legislature

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Sponsor Statement – HJR 6 – Legacy Wells

Relating to legacy wells and legacy well sites; urging the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, to open new areas of the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska for environmentally responsible oil and gas development; and requesting the Office of the Governor to increase nationwide awareness about legacy wells and well sites.

A year after the Alaska Legislature unanimously passed a resolution calling on the federal Bureau of Land Management to clean up and plug dozens of old oil and gas drilling sites in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, Alaskans are still waiting for a comprehensive cleanup plan. House Joint Resolution 6 calls on BLM to protect the land, sea and wildlife by plugging and cleaning up the wells.

Legacy Wells were drilled by the federal government from 1944 to 1981. Since drilling ceased only a handful have been correctly plugged and remediated.

The new resolution includes the following changes and updates:

- Only 17 of the 137 wells have been correctly plugged and cleaned up
- Urges BLM to work in a cooperative manner with the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and use the best practices when work is performed on well sites
- Consider handing over responsibility for Legacy Wells to an entity capable of cleaning up the sites more cost effectively within state and federal regulations
- Urges BLM to open new areas of NPR-A to responsible oil and gas leasing

House Joint Resolution 6 was referred to the House Resources Committee.

Prepared by Jeff Turner on February 4, 2013