

## State News for NSPE Members

### Louisiana Plugs Over 10% of Orphaned Oil Wells

Contractors have successfully plugged more than 10% of Louisiana's orphaned oil well sites through the funding provided by the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) passed in 2021. The state has already seen 519 wells plugged since mid-January, surpassing the highest number ever plugged in a full year by the state's Oilfield Site Restoration program, [EnergyPortal.eu](https://www.energyportal.eu) reports.

Orphaned well sites are designated by Louisiana's Office of Conservation when they lack a responsive operator, usually due to the operator going out of business or being unable to maintain compliance with state regulations. These orphaned wells have become a significant concern, with approximately 4,500 sites in Louisiana alone. The decline in oil and gas prices over recent years has exacerbated the number of orphaned wells as it financially strains companies in the industry.

The funding provided by the BIL, with an initial grant of \$25 million and an additional \$12.7 million from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, attracted larger-scale contractors who typically do not bid on smaller individual projects. This grant far exceeded the usual yearly funding allocated to closing up wells, which has facilitated the significant progress made so far.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has selected two primary contractors who have been working together with over a dozen crews in the field. The work is expected to continue until October, aiming to address a substantial portion of the orphaned well sites in Louisiana. [Read more.](#)

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### Louisiana, Texas to Get \$1.2B for Carbon Capture Projects

The US Department of Energy will spend \$1.2 billion in Louisiana and Texas to create Regional Direct Air Capture Hubs, an effort expected to create 2,300 jobs in

the Pelican State, [The Center Square reports](#).

Project Cypress, to be located in Calcasieu Parish, will work in coordination with Climeworks Corporation and Heirloom Carbon Technologies to remove more than 1 million metric tons of existing CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere each year and store it underground.

The project would be one of two initial commercial-scale sites that the Biden administration wants to grow into a nationwide network of direct air capture facilities to address legacy pollution. The second site, the South Texas DAC Hub, is slated for Kleberg County.

The \$1.2 billion in federal funding for the projects represents the largest investment in engineered carbon removal to date, with each hub expected to remove more than 250 times more carbon dioxide than the largest facility currently in operation, according to the Department of Energy.

In total, both projects are expected to remove 2 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, equivalent to the annual emissions of roughly 450,000 gasoline vehicles. The DOE cites estimates that the Biden administration's plan to reach net-zero emissions will require between 400 million and 1.8 billion metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> removed from the atmosphere annually by 2050. [Read more](#).

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## **First Solar Chooses Louisiana to Build Fifth US Panel Factory**

First Solar has selected Louisiana to build its fifth US factory amid a surge in demand for American-made solar panels. The company plans to invest \$1.1 billion to set up the facility at Acadiana Regional Airport in Iberia Parish in the southeastern state, [Reuters reports](#).

President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, a law passed last year that incentivizes homegrown production of clean energy equipment, is underpinning a boom in solar factory investments.

The project is expected to be completed by the first half of 2026 and would add 3.5 gigawatts of manufacturing capacity for the company, First Solar said.

Solar project developers in the US have flocked to First Solar's cadmium telluride products partially because the technology does not rely on polysilicon, a raw material primarily made in China and used in the vast majority of panels.

*Stay up to date on legislative issues through the [NSPE Advocacy Center](#).*

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## Vermont PE Rises to Top Leadership



**William (Bill) Atkinson, P.E., F.NSPE**, was installed as NSPE's 2023–24 president during a ceremony at NSPECon23 in Louisville, Kentucky, on August 3. He has spent most of his career volunteering for NSPE and various engineering organizations that hold true to his passion for protecting the public through licensure and ethical engineering decision making.

Atkinson serves as the engineering manager and lead engineer at Vermont Mechanical Inc., a mechanical and plumbing design build contractor that focuses on healthcare and commercial construction (where he has been employed since 2001). He currently directs the service and engineering departments.

Throughout his engineering career, Atkinson has taken on various volunteer and leadership positions within NSPE, the Vermont Society of Professional Engineers, ASHRAE, and NCEES. He served on the Vermont Board of Professional Engineers and the University of Vermont College of Engineering Advisory Board. He has also served as an ABET observer and as the president of the Clarkson University Vermont Alumni Chapter. He is a licensed professional engineer in New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.

Atkinson lives in Essex, Vermont, with his wife, Kim Atkinson, P.E., and two young active sons. When he and his wife are not working they are often found coaching or enjoying the outdoors in all seasons.

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## Honoring Excellence in the Profession

NSPE members were recently honored for their outstanding contributions to the profession during NSPECon23 in Louisville, Kentucky.

### Engineering Education Excellence Award

This award recognizes licensed engineering faculty who have demonstrated the ability to link engineering education with professional practice. It is sponsored by the Professional Engineers in Higher Education (PEHE) interest group.



**Waterloo Tsutsui, Ph.D., P.E.**, is a senior research associate in the School of Aeronautics and Astronautics at Purdue University where his primary aim is to provide a rigorous education that nurtures an engineering mindset among students and empowering them to analyze, communicate, and solve complex problems. He ensures students derive maximum advantage from meticulously designed educational experiences integrated into their curriculum, fostering lasting

knowledge and capabilities that extend far beyond the confines of the classroom for the ultimate benefit of students. As an example, Tsutsui implemented virtual labs and visualization in lab courses as an innovative way to link engineering practice to education.

### New Professional of the Year Award

This award recognizes a young NSPE member who has made outstanding contributions to the engineering profession and the community during the early years of one's career.



**Sri Kumar, P.E.**, is the president and CEO of Connico, a national consultancy serving the aviation, civil, and transportation markets. In his current role, he is responsible for outlining the company's strategy for the future, ensuring the company continues to execute its goals, and delivering excellence to clients from Tampa to Seattle. He is also committed to building Connico's employee-focused culture and is passionate about developing a strong, diverse, and uniquely talented team who work each day on solving some of the nation's most complex infrastructure challenges.

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## Emerging Leaders Program Seeks Candidates



The [NSPE Emerging Leaders Program](#) is seeking the next group of engineering change-makers. Candidates with 5–8 years of professional experience in the engineering field who are prepared to think strategically about their career and begin taking on leadership roles are [invited to apply](#).

The 2024 ELP syllabus and related time-commitments are available and the application for the program is due by **Thursday, August 31**.

[Apply Now](#)

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