

Claim 5 Engage with Relevant Community and Stakeholders

When an oil company takes over an established oil field it inherits the engineering design of the previous operator. Audits and reviews are undertaken and, where necessary, engineering modifications are made. Inevitably, some facility constructions slip through the cracks. The property owner of where the petroleum assets were located asked if he could purchase the water well owned by the oil company. Upon review of the well indicated, serious problems occurred during the completion phase where the previous operator left the downhole construction difficult for re-entry. The well construction was safe but I felt the property owner would not have the technical expertise or financial backing to manage the well. This water well was rarely used by the oil company but was essential to the land owner's operation. To ensure water security for his business, my recommendation was for the landowner to negotiate water rights for this well. Based on well status and documentation, I thought it would be wise to make a field visit to inspect the wellhead and surface facilities. The wellhead was in very poor condition and did not comply with our company's standards. Replacing the wellhead was not a straight forward operation. Whilst in the field, I requested a well-site meeting with the field superintendent and work-over supervisor. I required input from them as to the best way forward. The field superintendent needed to converse with the property owner to discover the optimal time for this operation to be performed. The workover supervisor gave his opinion of the safest way to execute the work. With this information, I was able to return to the office and start the design and procedural documentation. As this was a non-routine maintenance and I was unfamiliar with the procedure, I endeavoured to seek opinions from equipment suppliers. The work was not difficult to execute but there were some risks to the procedure. It was decided that though there was no need for a work-over rig to perform the task, the work would be done whilst the workover rig was within the area and between workover jobs. In the unlikely event a problem occurred, the work-over rig could be on site in a very short period of time.

It was evident from communications with the landowner that this well was critical to his operations. The company I worked for saw this as an opportunity to co-operate and proceeded with securing water rights with the landowner. The landowner preferred that we did not repair the well as any repairs may risk supply of water to his operations. He thought the attention given to this work indicated risks that the well could be abandoned. We had to allay his concerns and explain that the attention was due to the non-routine nature of the repair rather than complexity or risk to the procedure.

The operation was well planned and executed expeditiously. The wellhead and surface construction was designed for easy access and safe use for the landowner. The water well was maintained by the oil company.