

Permitting ^[1]

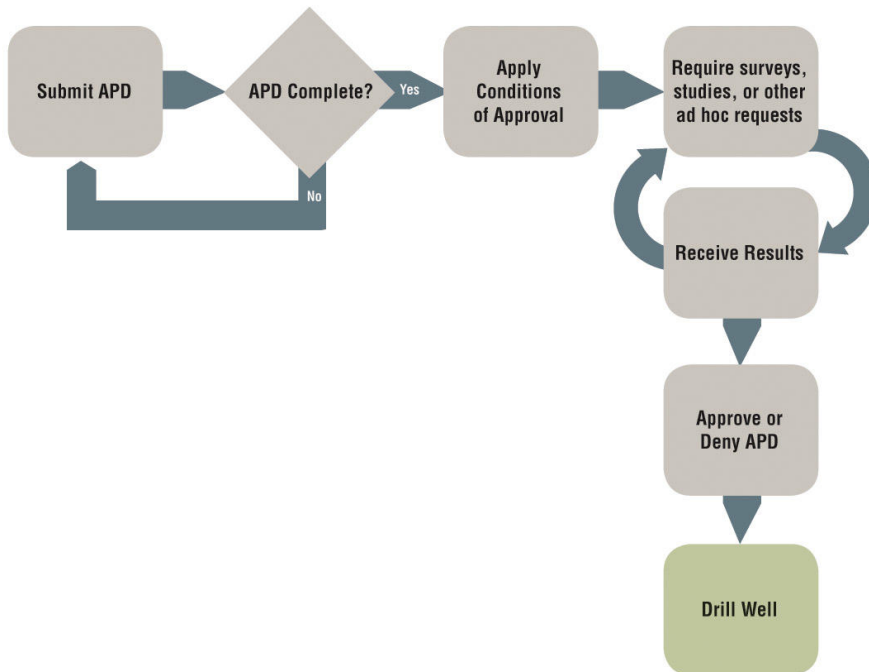


The Last Step in a Long, Bureaucratic Process

Only once a company has [obtained a lease](#) ^[2] and completed an [environmental analysis](#) ^[3] under NEPA can it apply for a permit to begin drilling. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 specifies that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) must approve Applications for Permit to Drill (APD) within 30 days, yet the average permit time is [220 days](#) ^[4]. In fact, depending on the field office, it is not uncommon for APDs to take years. Meanwhile, states only take [about 30 days](#) ^[5] to approve their corresponding permits for federal wells.

BLM often points to the number of approved APDs that remain undrilled as proof that they are meeting industry's permitting needs, when in fact the opposite is true. When it takes BLM months and even years to process permits, companies' must request several permits well in advance to ensure their rigs don't go idle. Plans often change in response to market forces and other factors. A frequent situation arises that nearby wells drilled in the interim indicate that other wells in the area are not prospective, and therefore, subsequent APDs are not drilled. If BLM could process a permit in a timely manner, then companies wouldn't have to request permits so far in advance, and permits would more closely match actual drilling activity.

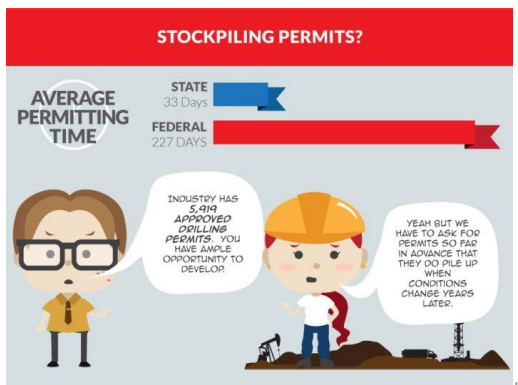
Many field offices are also leveling ad hoc requirements for APDs that have no basis in regulation or law, asking companies to perform extra cultural, wildlife, flood plain, or other surveys, among other measures. Such arbitrary requirements lengthen the APD processing time, and may vary greatly from field office to field office.



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Related Content:

[Court Order of Immediate Relief for APDs in Utah](#) ^[8]

[Alliance Comments on Proposed Rule Requiring Electronic Filing of APDs](#) ^[9]

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[Detailed Permitting Data](#) ^[11]

[Government Accountability Office's Report on BLM Well Inspections](#) ^[12]

[Norton Rose Fulbright Analysis of BLM APD Processing Time](#) ^[13]

[Leasing](#) ^[14]

[National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#) ^[15]

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