California’s geology is complex and diverse, offering a variety of methods for oil extraction. While California is one of the top six producing states in the United States, it has fewer operating wells compared to other states. As of 2019, California refineries import 75,345,560 barrels per day (bbl/d) of crude oil. This represents a decline over the past 30 years due to reduced fuel demand and increased use of hydraulic fracturing.

California oil production declined 1.5 percent from January 2011 to August 2020. The rise came through the development of new fields, with 39,573 new wells and 26,965 idle oil wells reported as of 2020. The Kern River field has the most EOR wells, with 1,871 active wells and 5,445 inactive wells. California represents the oil production in federal onshore and offshore areas.

Secondary recovery methods are used on 1,155 active wells, with 1,504 steam and 124 waterflood wells. Newly permitted producing and injecting wells are 39,573, with 35,218 producing and 4,355 injecting. EOR wells are concentrated in Ventura County. Kern River has the most EOR wells, with 1,871 active wells and 5,445 inactive wells. There are currently 63,734 plugged oil wells, which are ones that have been plugged and abandoned.

Extraction techniques vary depending on the reservoir characteristics. Enhanced oil recovery (EOR) is used to increase the amount of oil extracted compared to primary recovery. There are two types of steam injecting: cyclic steam and thermal recovery. Cyclic steam works by injecting pressurized water, followed by hot steam. Thermal recovery uses the natural pressure to force the oil through the rock. Examples of EOR fields in California include five top-six EOR fields and other states' fields.

The largest producers of crude oil are Texas, North Dakota, and California. Texas accounted for 46.0 percent of total crude oil production in the United States, California for 7.5 percent, and North Dakota for 4.4 percent. The rise in production came through increased activity in Texas, North Dakota, and California, with a consistent top producer, doubled compared to August 2020.

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In California, oil production shows state ranks in January 2010 vs. 2019. In January 2020, there were 2,705 active wells and 1,445 idle oil wells reported. California oil production declined 1.5 percent from January 2011 to August 2020. The rise came through the development of new fields, with 39,573 new wells and 26,965 idle oil wells reported as of 2020. Kern River field has the most EOR wells, with 1,871 active wells and 5,445 inactive wells. California represents the oil production in federal onshore and offshore areas.

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