



DEMANDING PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR OFFSHORE FRACKING AND ACIDIZING

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE CENTER (“EDC”) FILES LAWSUIT TO COMPEL A PUBLIC PROCESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR OFFSHORE DRILLING PERMITS

EDC filed a lawsuit to challenge the failure of the federal government to provide a public process and environmental analysis before approving 51 oil drilling permits allowing fracking and acidizing in the Santa Barbara Channel. Federal agencies in charge of issuing permits for offshore drilling, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (“BSEE”) and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (“BOEM”), have routinely allowed the use of risky well stimulation methods - fracking and acidizing - violating the core of the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”), which was designed to inform the public and decision-makers about the environmental impacts of actions before they occur.



DRILLING IN THE SANTA BARBARA CHANNEL

EDC's lawsuit challenges drilling permits that authorize fracking and acidizing from six platforms located within the Santa Barbara Channel - Gail, Gilda, Harmony, Heritage, Hondo, and Irene.

- The Santa Barbara Channel is home to the Channel Islands National Park and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, as well as a network of Marine Protected Areas.
- The Channel Islands harbor such incredible biological diversity that they have been dubbed “North America's Galapagos.”
- Numerous threatened and endangered species reside in the Santa Barbara Channel including blue, fin, and humpback whales, and the southern sea otter.

OFFSHORE WELL STIMULATION: FRACKING AND ACIDIZING

- Hydraulic fracturing (aka “fracking”) involves pumping a mixture of water, sand and chemicals down a well at extremely high pressures to break apart geologic formations and improve rates of oil or natural gas production. Fracking relies on “frac fluids” containing extensive amounts of chemicals, many undisclosed under “trade secret” and other business confidentiality laws. A recent Congressional investigation identified chemicals in typical fracking products that are known human carcinogens, hazardous air pollutants, or have been otherwise identified as risks to human health.
- Acid well stimulation (aka “acidizing”) uses the application of one or more acids, typically hydrofluoric acid and hydrochloric acid, to the well or underground geologic formation often at extremely high pressures. Acidizing may be used in combination with fracking. Hydrofluoric acid is one of the most dangerous chemicals utilized in any industrial process. It can damage lungs, cause severe burns, and can form a poisonous vapor cloud when heated above 67 degrees.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN HEALTH RISKS

The risks associated with these well stimulation methods include:

- Impacts to marine wildlife, air and water quality, and climate change,
- Accidental releases and chemical spills during transport, storage, and injection,
- Geologic hazards associated with purposely fracturing the geologic formation and additional fluid injection in seismically active areas,
- Potential damage to well casings that may not have been designed to safely accommodate the increased pressures associated with offshore well stimulation activities, and
- Extending the life of existing platforms, therefore prolonging existing threats from offshore drilling operations



NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT VIOLATIONS

NEPA requires the preparation of an environmental impact statement (“EIS”) for actions significantly affecting the environment, and the opportunity for public involvement in the preparation of these documents. Despite the environmental and human health risks that well stimulation poses, the federal government has never prepared an EIS before issuing a permit for offshore fracking or acidizing.

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about this case, contact EDC Senior Attorney, Brian Segee, (805) 258-2688. Please also review the comprehensive report published by EDC in 2013, disclosing the occurrence of offshore fracking, [“Dirty Water: Fracking Offshore California.”](#)