



# DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

## News Release

WEBSITE [conservation.ca.gov](http://conservation.ca.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** NR#2016-07  
April 11, 2016

**Contact:** Teresa Schilling/Don Drysdale/Krista Watson  
(916) 323-1886 or [pao@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:pao@conservation.ca.gov)

## STATE REGULATORS ORDER RINCON ISLAND OPERATORS TO REPAIR FACILITIES BY JUNE 1

SACRAMENTO – State regulators today ordered the operator of an oil facility in Ventura County to take actions to prevent environmental harm and protect the public. The State Oil and Gas Supervisor issued two orders to the Rincon Island Limited Partnership (RILP) to take actions by or before June 1, 2016. The [first order](#) is to remediate, repair or replace a number of oil wells and other infrastructure on man-made Rincon Island. The [second order](#) is to conduct tests and inspections on a nearby long-term idle well on the ocean floor.

Inspectors from the Department of Conservation's (DOC) Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources were on-site on February 23 and noted numerous violations related to the condition of the equipment. Valves, pipes and other equipment are "severely corroded and in an unsafe state of disrepair and dysfunction," according to the first order. The order impacts more than 75 wells, tanks, or other features and facilities on Rincon Island.

"The number of long-term idle wells at this site in the marine environment is of great concern," said State Oil & Gas Supervisor Ken Harris. "The operator has failed to maintain the facility to regulatory standards. It also is apparent that those standards and their application need strengthening. That is why the Division is supporting legislation this year that would ensure idle wells that are a potential risk to public health and the environment are properly plugged. We also are moving forward with regulatory proceedings to enhance the oversight and safety requirements across the state's oil and gas fields."

DOC has notified the State Lands Commission – which controls offshore oil leases within three miles of the California coast -- and other regulatory agencies about the violations found at Rincon Island.

The offshore well (API number 21101653) was drilled in 1961. It is about 3,000 feet from Rincon Island at a depth of approximately 55 feet in state waters. It is listed as an injection well; the last injection recorded was in 1977. The wellhead is believed to have been damaged by commercial fishing operations sometime before 1990, but there is no evidence that RILP has ever conducted any mandated inspections since acquiring the lease.

---

*The Department of Conservation's mission is to balance today's needs with tomorrow's challenges and foster intelligent, sustainable, and efficient use of California's energy, land, and mineral resources.*

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

801 K STREET ● MS 24-07 ● SACRAMENTO, CA. 95814 ● PHONE 916 / 323-1886 ● FAX 916 / 323-1887 ● TDD 916 / 324-2555

RILP must conduct an inspection of the ocean floor within a 100-foot radius of the well, inspect the wellhead, and inspect any production lines attached to the well.

While operators may maintain an idle well for many years under current law, that may change. The Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources is supporting [a bill, Assembly Bill 2729](#), authored by Assembly Members Das Williams (D-Santa Barbara) and Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond) that will close regulatory loopholes and increase industry accountability for idle wells. Rincon Island illustrates the importance of this legislation. RILP has a \$250,000 bond covering all the wells on the island on file with the Division, as well as a separate \$5 million bond with the State Lands. However, if permanently plugging all the wells at the facility and cleaning up the attendant infrastructure becomes necessary, the cost may exceed that bond funding.

The Division, part of the [Department of Conservation](#), oversees the drilling, operation, maintenance, and final plugging and abandonment of oil, natural gas, and geothermal wells in California. The regulatory program emphasizes the wise development of oil, natural gas, and geothermal resources in the state through sound engineering practices that protect the environment, prevent pollution, and ensure public safety.

###