



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

801 K STREET • MS 24-07 • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

PHONE 916 / 323-1886 • FAX 916 / 323-1887 • TDD 916 / 324-2555 • WEB SITE conservation.ca.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NR#2015-14

July 1, 2015

Contact:

Teresa Schilling/Don Drysdale
(916) 323-1886

CALIFORNIA LAUNCHES NEW REGULATIONS FOR OIL & NATURAL GAS WELL STIMULATION

SACRAMENTO – Stringent environmental regulations for the use of oil and gas well stimulation took effect today in California. The regulations bolster transparency, reporting requirements and groundwater protection. They replace interim regulations developed by the Department of Conservation (DOC) that since January 1, 2014 had guided production methods such as hydraulic fracturing and acid matrix stimulation.

The [new regulations](#) were required by legislation signed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in September 2013, Senate Bill 4 by Senator Fran Pavley.

“In drafting these regulations, we examined a tremendous amount of thoughtful stakeholder input and took a thorough look at regulations throughout the U.S.,” State Oil and Gas Supervisor Dr. Steven Bohlen said. “The regulations now in effect in California are comprehensive, and will protect the environment, drinking water, and public health and safety.”

DOC’s Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) today also certified an accompanying statewide [Environmental Impact Report](#) about the practice of well stimulation. The EIR was mandated by statute to evaluate impacts throughout a large and diverse state involving both ongoing projects and projects not yet anticipated.

The EIR concludes that most of the environmental impacts associated with the use of well stimulation can be reduced to the level of “less than significant” if suggested mitigation measures are utilized. Impacts will vary with local conditions. Among the mitigation measures proposed are the use of alternative water sources, such as recycled or treated water to the extent feasible; setbacks from surface waters; and enhanced well cementing requirements for the protection of groundwater.

Additionally, the Natural Resources Agency and the California Council on Science & Technology today announced that Volumes II-IV of an independent scientific assessment on well stimulation treatments will be published July 9. More information and Volume I of the report can be viewed [here](#).

“All of these elements – the regulations, the EIR and the scientific report – will ensure that the State’s

actions on well stimulation are grounded in the best and most up-to-date science, and that we have the knowledge and the tools to be better stewards of the land, water and energy resources going forward,” Bohlen said.

Historically, California has relied on well construction standards to ensure that petroleum-related gasses and fluids are confined to their proper geologic zones. Highlights of the new regulations include:

- Well stimulation projects must be permitted by DOGGR and reviewed by the State Water Resources Control Board to determine whether groundwater monitoring is required and, if so, how best to do so;
- Approval to conduct well stimulation treatment is contingent upon extensive engineering review and well integrity evaluation in order to ensure that the treatment is confined to the intended geologic zone;
- Neighboring parties must receive advance notification of projects and can request that their water quality be tested to establish a baseline;
- The chemicals used in the process must be disclosed;
- Comprehensive post-stimulation reports must be filed, including the amount of water used and the source of that water;
- Seismic monitoring must take place during well stimulation operations. In the event of a magnitude 2.7 earthquake within a prescribed distance of a well stimulation operation, the project will be halted and an evaluation will be conducted.

“Groundwater monitoring, which is being implemented by the State Water Resources Control Board, is a key element of SB 4. The State Water Board has implemented with DOGGR interim groundwater monitoring requirements and plans to adopt final model criteria for groundwater monitoring at the State Water Board meeting on July 7. More information can be found [here](#).”

“SB 4 was landmark legislation that set tight timelines for implementation,” DOC Chief Deputy Director Jason Marshall said. “Multiple state agencies coordinated to successfully meet both interim deadlines and the final due date.”

California is the country's third-largest oil-producing state. According to preliminary data, the state produced more than 205 million barrels of oil in 2014, up from 199.8 million barrels in 2013. Most oil and gas production in California occurs in Kern County.

California has been dealing with the effects of drought for four years. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit Drought.CA.Gov.

Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at SaveOurWater.com.

###