



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

News Release

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STATE OFFICIALS TO HOLD AQUIFER EXEMPTION HEARING IN BAKERSFIELD

BAKERSFIELD – State regulators are accepting public comments on a proposal to expand the existing aquifer exemption in the Round Mountain oil field in Kern County. The comment period runs through June 25 and includes a public meeting in Bakersfield on June 14.

The proposed aquifer exemption would allow the State, in compliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, to approve injection into the identified area, either for enhanced oil recovery or for disposal of waste fluids associated with oil and gas production. The expanded exemption would apply to Jewett Sand, Pyramid Hill Sand, the Vedder Formation, and the Walker Formation of the field, which is about nine miles northeast of Bakersfield.

The California Department of Conservation's Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board preliminarily concur that these formations meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and State criteria for an exemption. A comprehensive scientific analysis indicates that:

- ◆ The aquifers proposed for exemption contain oil and/or natural gas and, therefore, do not serve as a source of drinking water and will not serve as such in the future.
- ◆ The injected fluid will be contained within the aquifers.

“This is a longstanding oil field, discovered in 1928, that includes about 1,300 wells operated by six (6) companies and still has significant reserves,” State Oil and Gas Supervisor Ken Harris said. “The data demonstrates an aquifer exemption is appropriate at this location.”

The Round Mountain field produced 3.6 million barrels of oil and more than 179 million barrels of water in 2015. The field reached peak production of 5.4 million barrels in 1938 and has cumulative production of more than 136 million barrels. The field covers 11,500 acres (18 square miles).

If the Division and the State Water Board continue to concur that this formation qualifies for an aquifer exemption following the public comment period, the proposal will be subject to approval by the U.S. EPA.

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.

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The public hearing will be conducted from 4-7 p.m. Tuesday, June 14, at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel, 5101 California Avenue, Bakersfield. Comments also can be emailed to comments@conservation.ca.gov, faxed to (916) 324-0948, or mailed to the Department of Conservation, 801 K Street, MS 24-02, Sacramento, CA, 95814, attention: Aquifer Exemption. The written comment period ends at 7 p.m. on June 25.

Documents related to the Aquifer Exemption proposal can be found at http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dog/Pages/Aquifer_Exemptions.aspx.

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