



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

News Release

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STATE REGULATOR ORDERS COMPANY TO REPAIR OIL WELLS ON ISLAND OFF VENTURA COUNTY COAST

VENTURA -- State oil and gas regulators have issued an [emergency order](#) to the Rincon Island Limited Partnership (RILP) seeking swift, significant repairs at a small manmade island about 3,000 feet off the Ventura County coast south of Carpinteria. The operators must take several measures, including plugging two wells, to prevent environmental harm and protect the public.

“The facilities on Rincon Island have not been properly maintained,” State Oil & Gas Supervisor Ken Harris said. “As we monitored compliance with orders we [issued in April](#), it became apparent that the problems at Rincon Island may extend beyond the surface facilities. We are directing them to look closer at their underground infrastructure.”

The order from the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources requires RILP to, among other things:

- ◆ Arrange for an oil rig and associated equipment to be brought to the island so that necessary work can be completed. Getting a rig to the facility will require the use of a vessel, since the causeway from the mainland to the facility is in disrepair and must be recertified for the passage of heavy vehicles and equipment.
- ◆ Install bridge plugs into wells 8A and 50A, which are under pressure and thus have the potential to leak.
- ◆ Evaluate all other wells and associated wellhead infrastructure (such as casing heads, tubing, gauges, seals, and valves) to determine the integrity and functionality of the equipment, as well as whether any other wells are pressurized. Such testing may reveal the need for additional well plugging.
- ◆ Immediately address all well integrity issues identified by the required testing and monitoring.

The Division’s April 11 order to RILP cited more than 60 violations visible to the naked eye regarding surface infrastructure. That order did not address issues concerning the condition, integrity, or functionality of the wells or wellhead infrastructure or other “down-hole” aspects of the wells on the island.

Today’s order requires that Rincon look down-hole into the integrity of the wells, conduct significant diagnostic tests and, if necessary, fix weaknesses in their wells before a problem arises.

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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None of the wells on Rincon Island have produced oil since the causeway was closed in 2008. The Division is supporting [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 Commission. 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.

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