



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

News Release

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STATE OFFICIALS TO HOLD AQUIFER EXEMPTION HEARING IN LIVERMORE

LIVERMORE – With groundwater protection as their guiding concern, state regulators will take public input on a proposal involving the Livermore oil field at a January meeting.

A proposed “aquifer exemption” expansion in the field is under consideration. If approved, the expansion would allow the State, in compliance with the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, to expand the underground geologic formation into which waste fluids associated with oil and gas production can be injected. The expanded exemption would apply to the Greenville Sands portion of the Cierbo Formation in the field approximately 3,400 feet east of Greenville Road, the eastern boundary for the Livermore city limits.

The California Department of Conservation’s Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board preliminarily concur that this formation meets United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and State criteria for an exemption.

“People associate the word ‘aquifer’ with drinking water, but that’s a misnomer,” State Oil & Gas Supervisor Ken Harris said. “In this case, the groundwater is naturally commingled with oil and would not be valuable as a drinking water source. The operator (E&B Natural Resources) pumps out the oil-water mixture, skims off the oil, and puts the water back where it came from. We are absolutely committed to protecting sources of drinking water in the aquifer exemption process.”

A comprehensive scientific analysis of the proposal for the Livermore field indicates:

- ◆ that the geologic formation to be exempted does not currently serve as a source of drinking water and is not reasonably expected to supply a public water system;
- ◆ that the injection of fluids will not affect the quality of water that is used, or may be used for any beneficial use;
- ◆ and that the injected fluid will remain in the aquifer or portion of the aquifer that would be exempted due to geologic conditions.

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 is scheduled for 5 p.m. January 11 at the City Council Chambers, 3575 Pacific Avenue, Livermore, CA 94550.

Written comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. on January 25. Comments may be submitted by email to comments@conservation.ca.gov, by FAX to (916) 445-3319, or by mail to:

Department of Conservation
801 K Street, MS 18-05
Sacramento, CA 95814
ATTN: Aquifer Exemption

If regulators continue to concur that this formation qualifies for an aquifer exemption following the public comment period and public hearing, the proposal will be subject to approval by the EPA.

The Livermore oil field includes six active and two idle oil wells and one water disposal well. In 2015, the field produced 9,687 barrels of oil, 801,000 cubic feet of natural gas, and 30,156 barrels of “produced water,” which are pumped back into the geologic formation from which they came.

The field straddles Patterson Pass Road, but the active water disposal well is south of the road. The closest groundwater well used by the local water agency is almost four miles west of the oil field on the west side of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and is not geologically connected to the oil reservoir.

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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