



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
HOPPER MOUNTAIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX
CALIFORNIA CONDOR RECOVERY PROGRAM
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October 23, 2017

Department of Conservation
801 K Street, MS 24-02
Sacramento, CA 95814
ATTN: Aquifer Exemption

This letter is in response to the California Department of Conservation, Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources proposal to expand the current aquifer exemption designation for the Basal Sespe Formation in the Tar Creek-Topatopa Area of the Sespe Oil Field, located in Ventura County, about 3 miles north of the City of Fillmore, California.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) California Condor Recovery Program and Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) has operations and recovery efforts ongoing within and adjacent to the Sespe Oil Field. This portion of the California condor's range, in the mountains north of the City of Fillmore, are key to the Service's efforts to re-establish this endangered species within its historic and current range of approximately 15,000 square miles in southern California. Throughout the species range, the primary impediment to the recovery of the California condor continues to be mortality resulting from consumption of spent lead ammunition found in the carrion they feed on.

On July 18, 2013, the Service issued a list of above-surface measures to the County of Ventura's Planning Division, recommended to protect the California condor at oil and gas exploration, development, and production facilities in Ventura County, California. Seneca Oil, the largest production company in the Sespe Oil Field, has supported the effort in implementing the proposed measures and serve as the example to other companies for managing oil and gas facilities to reduce potential impacts to the California condor. Other operators near the Refuge have also instituted many of these measures, and continue to work cooperatively with the Service to try and minimize any impacts to condors from their operations. Currently, the Service has not evaluated any potential groundwater or surface water impacts from these operations or the proposed project to the California condor, Refuge habitats or water sources.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Kirkland
California Condor Field Coordinator

Cc: Bruce Weihs, Sr. Oil & Gas Eng., Department of Conservation, Ventura, CA
Stacy Armitage, Assistant Regional Refuge Chief, USFWS, Sacramento, CA
Steve Henry, Field Office Manager, USFWS/Ventura Field Office, Ventura, CA