

Trump Bucks Protests, Opens 725,500 Acres of California's Central Coast to Oil Drilling

By [Center For Biological Diversity](#)

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The Trump administration today dismissed protests and made a formal decision to open 725,500 acres of public lands and mineral estate across California's Central Coast and the Bay Area to new oil and gas drilling and fracking.

The public lands the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has earmarked for leasing are in the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Merced, Monterey, San Benito, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Stanislaus.

"This reckless move is the toxic convergence of Trump's climate denial, loyalty to the oil industry and grudge against California," said Clare Lakewood, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Turning over these spectacular wild places to dirty drilling and fracking will sicken Californians, harm endangered species and fuel climate chaos. We'll fight tooth and nail to make sure it doesn't happen."

The move will end a more than five-year-old moratorium on leasing federal public land and mineral estate in the state to oil companies.

The BLM has not held a single lease sale in California since 2013, when a judge ruled that the agency violated the law when it issued oil leases in Monterey and Fresno Counties without considering the risks of fracking. The ruling responded to a suit brought by the Center and the Sierra Club challenging a BLM decision to auction off about 2,500 acres of land in those counties to oil companies.

"The Trump administration is putting California's communities and our climate at risk as they prioritize fossil fuel industry profits over our public lands and the health and safety of our families," said Sierra Club campaign representative Jenny Binstock. "We will continue to use every tool at our disposal to push back against this irresponsible decision and to protect our public lands from fracking."

Fracking is an extreme oil-extraction process that blasts toxic chemicals mixed with water underground to crack rocks. According to the BLM, about 90 percent of new oil and gas wells on public lands are fracked.

A 2015 report from the California Council on Science and Technology concluded that

fracking in California happens at unusually shallow depths, dangerously close to underground drinking water supplies, with unusually high concentrations of toxic chemicals.

In 2016 Monterey County voters passed Measure Z, which bans fracking, new oil and gas wells and new waste-injection wells. San Benito County voters have also passed a ballot measure banning fracking. Alameda County has passed an ordinance banning fracking, and Santa Cruz County has passed an ordinance banning fracking and all other oil and gas development.

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