# **ATTORNEY GENERAL BECERRA, GOVERNOR NEWSOM AND STATE AGENCIES OPPOSE SALE OF OIL AND GAS LEASES IN KERN COUNTY**

US Fed News

December 4, 2020 Friday 8:31 AM EST

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**Length:** 617 words

**Body**

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Dec. 4 -- The California Attorney General issued the following press release:

SACRAMENTO- California Attorney General Xavier Becerra,Governor Gavin Newsom, the California Air Resources Board (CARB), andthe California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW),today filed a protest challenging the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed sale of seven ***oil*** and gas leases inKern County. More than 95 percent of federal drilling in California already occurs in ***Kern*** County, often in close proximityto California's most vulnerable communities.Instead ofconducting a detailed environmental analysis of the leases,BLM is relying ona flawed programmatic environmental reviewfinalized in December 2019 that opened more than one million acres of public lands in Central California to ***oil*** and gas drilling. Attorney General Becerra, GovernorNewsom, and state agencies arecurrently challengingtheprogrammatic environmental reviewin court.

"Time and time again, the Trump Administration has worked outside the bounds of the law to advance the interests of industry polluters,"said Attorney General Becerra."BLM is recklessly jamming through the sale of ***oil*** and gas leases in ***Kern*** County using a flawed environmental analysis that is being challenged in court. Rest assured, we'lldowhatever it takes to protect our public lands and uphold the rule of law."

The ***Kern*** Countylease salebuilds on BLM's continued efforts to open federal lands in California to additional ***oil*** and gas development. On January 17, 2020,Attorney General Becerra,Governor Newsom, CARB, the Department of Water Resources, and CDFW,filed a lawsuitchallenging BLM's plan to open up more than one million acres of public lands in Central California to ***oil*** and gas drilling. The lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California alleges that BLM's programmaticenvironmental review of the project failed to fully evaluate thesignificant and adverse impacts on the communities and environment of eight Central California counties, and requests that the court set aside the decision.

On August 26, 2020, BLM relied on the same flawed programmaticenvironmental review to propose seven parcels of land in ***Kern*** Countyfor a lease sale in December 2020.The following month, Attorney General Becerra and CARBsubmitted commentsslamming BLM's draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact evaluating the environmental consequences of selling the above seven ***oil*** and gas leases in ***Kern*** County.

BLM's decision endangers California's environment and the public health of its communities.Hydraulic fracturing (fracking)causes pollution from the evaporation of toxic chemicals that return to the surfaceand has been tied to an increase inhazardous air emissions in already overburdened communities near ***oil*** and gas operations. In ***Kern*** County, excess pollution from existing operationshassignificantly increasedthe rates and risks of asthma, heart disease, lung disease, and cancerinnearbycommunities.Fracking also heightens the risk of well cracks that can contaminate underground sources of drinking water and creates millions of gallons of wastewater contaminated with heavy metals and chemicals.

In the protest, AttorneyGeneral Becerraandstate partnersargue - as they did in theSeptember comment letter -that BLM's draft Environmental Assessment is deficient and must be revisedbecause itfailsto fully analyze the significant effects of ***oil*** and gas leasing and relies on the flawedprogrammatic environmental review, which:

A copy of the protest can be found here. For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at contentservices@htlive.com

**Load-Date:** December 3, 2020

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