# **California, again targeting Kern oil production, sues federal government over fracking review**

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**Body**

Jan. 17-- Jan. 17--California Attorney General Xavier Becerra led a coalition of state agencies Friday in suing the Trump administration over its recent review of fracking impacts in the Central Valley, essentially calling on the courts to block the Bureau of Land Management from resuming lease auctions of federal land for ***oil*** production primarily in ***Kern*** County.

The federal lawsuit, coming less than a week after an environmental group sued over the same BLM review, means a years-long legal process that culminated in the release of an amended environmental review of fracking practices last year may have to begin anew. That has the potential to stall all new federal drilling leases in the state for years to come.

A BLM spokeswoman in California defended the agency's fracking review as having incorporated the best available information, including the state's own analysis.

Fracking injects sand, water and small amounts of sometimes toxic chemicals underground to release petroleum deposits.

Becerra has sued the Trump administration dozens of times over a variety of concerns. He alleged in a morning news conference that the federal government failed to consider the full health and environmental effects of the controversial oilfield technique also known as hydraulic fracturing.

The BLM study's deficiencies, he alleged, jeopardize Central Valley residents' air and water quality and raises seismic risks. He also raised concerns that allowing fracking on 1.2 million acres of federal land in California threatens to worsen global climate change.

"We are suing the Trump administration once again for acting as if they are above the law," he said.

He added that much ***oil*** and gas production happens near some of the state's most vulnerable communities, which he said already struggle with poor air quality.

"Adding fracking to the equation would only make things worse," he said.

Joining the attorney general as plaintiffs in the suit were Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has been criticized locally for cracking down on ***oil*** production and planning to curtail in-state petroleum production, and the California Air Resources Board, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Department of Water Resources.

Assemblyman Vince Fong, R-Bakersfield, issued a statement critical of Friday's lawsuit.

"Again, the Governor continues to take California in the wrong direction," Fong wrote. "Everyday Californians continue to be harmed by the lack of sensible and commonsense energy policies in Sacramento."

"It is unfortunate that there seems to be more focus on making political statements instead of helping Californians get affordable and reliable energy," he continued. "Producing energy in California by Californians would reduce our dependence on foreign ***oil***, strengthen our economy, create jobs and better power our state."

Also criticizing the state's action Friday was Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield, who said cutting a source in-state ***oil*** production would increase the state's reliance on imports.

"The state's decision to once again sue the Trump Administration -- this time by refusing to accept the BLM's science-based analysis -- is another political stunt that will adversely impact the people who call California home," McCarthy said in an emailed statement.

On Tuesday, the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit against BLM that makes similar allegations that the agency's fracking review was inadequate.

CBD was one of the original plaintiffs in the 2016 lawsuit that halted federal ***oil*** and gas leases in California regardless of whether the would-be oilfield operator planned to frack the property.

Industry leaders have emphasized that although the BLM study covered federal property in many counties, fracking happens far more frequently in western ***Kern*** County than anywhere else in the state.

The BLM has said that ***oil*** drilling on federal land in California represents only about 8 percent of the state's total petroleum production. It says only about one in five ***oil*** wells on federal land in California is fracked.

The BLM's supplemental review, performed by court order and released last year, looked at fracking's potential effects on air and water, cultural resources, livestock grazing, wildlife, seismicity and social and economic resources.

The agency said its findings relied on studies by the California Council on Science and Technology and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, as well as an environmental review by the ***Kern*** County Planning and Natural Resources Department.

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