# **San Fran looks to wean itself off Kern County oil revenues**

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**Body**

Aug. 03-- Aug. 3--For decades, the gift Alfred Fuhrman bestowed on his beloved San Francisco worked just as he hoped it would, paying for upkeep at Golden Gate Park and helping fund the city's library system.

Few knew, or cared, where the money came from -- until about three years ago, that is, when word got out the city had been quietly collecting royalties from petroleum production at the ***Kern*** River ***Oil*** Field, way down south in ***Kern*** County.

Bay Area environmentalists were mortified. The arrangement, still responsible for hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in city revenue, would need to end as soon as possible if San Francisco hopes to remain true to its official policies for fighting climate change.

And so it shall be: according to city staff reports and an email from a city real estate official, San Francisco will walk away from its longstanding lease agreement with Chevron Corp. covering 800 acres of land north and northeast of Bakersfield. Within a year, the parcel's 82 active ***oil*** wells, representing a little less than 1 percent of the field's total, are to be closed for good.

But turning a perceived environmental liability into a well-intentioned sacrifice isn't always so simple.

Following San Francisco's adoption of a "Keep it in the Ground" ordinance in late 2016, city officials had planned to install photoelectric solar panels on all 1,500 acres bequeathed by Fuhrman in 1941, including grazing land and about 40 acres west of Coalinga. That was supposed to raise $484,000 per year, more than enough to make up for the lost ***oil*** lease revenue.

That plan has since fallen through. Rather than continue to own the property, as originally envisioned, the city wants to sell it with a deed restriction that the land never again be used for ***oil*** production.

The idea now is to set aside the parcels for wildlife habitat stretching from the ***oil*** field to a swath of grazing land on the hills north and east of California's second-most prolific reservoir.

The city is in talks with a conservation nonprofit, the Center for Natural Lands Management, whose maintenance of the habitat would be funded by a proposed endowment from Chevron, according to a city staff report.

As a parting of ways years in the making, the situation has brought together parties on very different sides of the state's highly contentious debate over what to do about climate change and how the heart of California ***oil*** production should figure into that discussion.

A climate advocacy organization that supported the city ordinance, 350 Bay Area, views the process for ending Chevron's use of the property as San Francisco "putting its money where its mouth was" on curtailing greenhouse-gas emissions.

Jed Holtzman, the group's senior policy analyst, said the situation is a perfect example of government and private enterprise creating a "glide path" for gradually weaning the state off petroleum.

"That's going to need to be happening a lot more over time, and I think you know, the glide path is key," he said, "because in order for folks' jobs to be protected, in order for people's livelihoods to be protected, in order for folks' families to be protected, we all need to be working from the same play book on the same page."

But Tracy Leach, representative of ***Kern*** Citizens for Energy, a pro-industry group that has supported continued ***oil*** production locally, called San Francisco's actions senseless.

"What a shame for the people of San Francisco with the unfortunate loss of funding to their parks and libraries," she said by email.

"Given the enormous amount of petroleum that Californians need and consume," she continued, "'keeping it in the ground here in our state, merely makes us more dependent on foreign ***oil***, and robs California of the jobs and tax revenues, instead giving those benefits away to foreign countries."

Chevron has said little publicly about its discussions with San Francisco over the fate of the property.

The company confirmed by email it operates the land on behalf of the City and County of San Francisco, and that the lease originally dated March 5, 1963 -- it previously was held by Shell ***Oil*** Co. -- is scheduled to expire on March 31, 2020. Chevron declined to say anything more, beyond stating it plans to continue operating wells on the lease until its expiration.

San Francisco officials, too, have opted to add little explanation to their official reports, saying they continue to negotiate with Chevron and other parties on what will be done with the property.

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