# **United States : Attorney General Becerra Slams Trump Administration Plan to Sell Seven Oil and Gas Leases in Kern County**

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**Body**

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) today submitted comments slamming the U.S. Bureau of Land Managements (BLM) draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact evaluating the impacts of selling seven ***oil*** and gas leases totaling more than 4,000 acres in ***Kern*** County. More than 95 percent of federal drilling in California already occurs in ***Kern*** County, often in close proximity to Californias most vulnerable communities. In its analysis, BLM relies on a flawed programmatic environmental review finalized in December 2019 that opened more than one million acres of public lands in Central California to ***oil*** and gas drilling to avoid conducting a detailed environmental analysis of the seven leases. Attorney General Becerra, Governor Newsom, and state agencies are currently challenging the programmatic environmental review in court.

The Trump Administration is once again ignoring environmental and public health risks as it recklessly promotes ***oil*** and gas development using a flawed environmental analysis, said Attorney General Becerra. But that doesn't mean they get to ignore science or break the law. BLM must conduct the required environmental analysis before it moves another inch forward with this misguided proposal.

California isn't going to back down from defending our environment and protected land from attacks by this Administration, said Governor Gavin Newsom. Climate change is real, and California will not stand idly by as the President tries to drive this country off a climate cliff.

Hydraulic fracturing (fracking) operations use high-pressure injections of water and chemicals to break rock formations underground and release ***oil*** and gas. This activity can cause pollution from the evaporation of toxic chemicals that return to the surface and has been tied to an increase in hazardous air emissions in already overburdened communities near ***oil*** and gas operations. 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.

The ***Kern*** County lease sale builds on BLM's continued efforts to open federal lands in California to additional ***oil*** and gas development. On January 17, 2020, Attorney General Becerra, in his independent capacity and representing Governor Newsom, CARB, the Department of Water Resources, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, filed a lawsuit challenging BLMs 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 BLMs programmatic environmental review of the project failed to fully evaluate the significant 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 programmatic environmental review to propose seven parcels of land in ***Kern*** County for a lease sale in December 2020. BLMs decision endangers Californias environment and the public health of its communities. Excess pollution in this part of California including methane, particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, and toxic air pollution from ***oil*** and gas operations significantly increases the rates and risks of asthma, heart disease, lung disease, and cancer.

In the comment letter, Attorney General Becerra and CARB argue that BLMs draft Environmental Assessment is deficient and must be revised because it fails to fully analyze the significant effects of ***oil*** and gas leasing and relies on the flawed programmatic environmental review, which:

Significantly underestimates the percent of new wells that would be drilled using fracking;

Ignores recent studies and best available science in evaluating the impacts of fracking;

Does not consider or attempt to mitigate the impacts of ***oil*** and gas development on nearby environmental justice communities;

Fails to analyze its proposed action for consistency with California state standards and policies, including Californias statutory targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions;

Fails to adequately analyze impacts to groundwater; and

Fails to adequately consider or mitigate the significant climate impacts of opening up more than 4,000 acres of public lands to new ***oil*** and gas leasing.

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