

Fracking protesters: 'keep the oil in the soil'

The Long Beach City Hall sees about 20 protesters during a California Coastal Commission meeting.



Solomon Leyva chants during an anti-fracking protest at the California Coastal Commission meeting in Long Beach on Wednesday. Photo Todd Johnson

Todd Johnson, / March 12, 2014

Anti-fracking demonstrators protested outside Long Beach City Hall during the California Coastal Commission meeting yesterday morning while wearing hazmat suits, carrying boogie boards and chanting anti-fracking slogans.

Roughly 20 protesters showed up to voice their concern about the controversial procedure that involves blasting water and industrial chemicals into the ground at pressures high enough to crack geologic formations and release oil and natural gas, according to the Center for Biological Diversity.

"We are here to tell the Coastal Commission to stop fracking off the coast of California because it is extremely dangerous and toxic," said Hillary Aidun, an organizer for the Center for Biological Diversity. "The Coastal Commission is tasked with protecting our ecosystem, and obviously they can't allow fracking to happen while protecting the coastal ecosystem."

Opponents of fracking say the procedure pollutes ground water and destabilizes the Earth's crust while advocates claim that it is a safe method of oil extraction.

The issue of fracking was not on the Coastal Commission's agenda, but the Center for Biological Diversity's staff attorney, Miyoko Sakashita, spoke about fracking during the public comment portion of the meeting.

“We are asking the Coastal Commission to do everything they can to protect our coast from fracking,” she said. “It is a dirty and dangerous activity.”

Sarah Christie, the legislative director for the Coastal Commission, said her organization takes environmental concerns into account.

“The commission takes its responsibility to protect ocean water quality and wildlife very seriously,” she said. “We are currently engaged in a process to determine how best to do that within the existing law.”

She added that the Coastal Commission is looking into Senate Bill 1132, which could ban fracking.

“We are following legislative efforts in Sacramento to address these issues,” she said.

“The public has been engaged with the commission. I think the commission is definitely getting the message.”

According to the Center for Biological Diversity, four offshore wells in Long Beach Harbor were fracked in December.

The Center for Biological Diversity plans to join more than a dozen organizations to protest fracking outside of the State Capitol on Saturday.

Solomon Leyva, who wore a hazmat suit and chanted “Keep the oil in the soil,” said that he doesn’t understand why the Coastal Commission would allow fracking off the coast of Long Beach.

“I want them to know that they can’t get away with doing this without anyone noticing,” he said. “I have to do something.”