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## Busted Boom Challenges Gov. Brown to Halt California Fracking

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By Kassie Siegel Director,  
Center for Biological Diversity's  
Climate Law Institute

Once upon a time, oil companies offered California a deal with the devil. They promised us an economic bounty if we let them pollute our air, contaminate our water and dump fracking chemicals into our ocean.

Their promises were based on sky-high estimates of how much oil could be pried out of the state's Monterey Shale formation with fracking and other extreme techniques.

But those estimates were a bit off, it turns out. The U.S. Energy Information Administration, we learned this week, is suddenly cutting calculations of the amount of recoverable oil in the Monterey Shale by a mind-blowing 96 percent.

That bombshell puts Gov. Jerry Brown on the spot. Despite the governor's green reputation, his administration has endorsed an expansion of fracking, acidizing and other dangerous forms of oil extraction.

With disturbingly little government oversight, companies have fracked and acidized wells near homes and farms and elementary schools in communities from Los Angeles to Monterey

County and the Central Valley. Fracking -- which blasts huge amounts of water mixed with toxic chemicals into the earth to fracture rocks -- has already taken place in at least 10 California counties, as well as in hundreds of offshore wells in California's wildlife-rich coastal waters.

The public hates it. Two-thirds of California voters want a fracking moratorium, according to one recent poll. A state Senate bill that would impose a moratorium is gaining strength.

Leading climate scientists, Central Valley residents suffering health problems associated with drilling and fracking, and drought-challenged farmers who don't want their precious water supplies used up or contaminated by fracking chemicals have all implored Gov. Brown to halt fracking.

Now the governor has a fresh chance to heed those calls. There's certainly no more excuse for not seeing through the empty promises from this dirty industry.

But while the EIA's new report shows that the easy money dangled before us by the oil companies was a myth, the danger to our state is still very real.

Fracking is continuing in California, and much-touted new regulations that went into effect this year are not protecting our air, water and climate.

Oil companies using fracking and other extreme techniques in Los Angeles and Orange County have employed millions of pounds of formaldehyde and other dangerous “air toxic” chemicals in recent months, according to South Coast Air Quality Management District data.

Our climate is still under the gun from California’s oil production because fracking allows exploitation of fossil fuel reserves that we cannot afford to burn, while also producing huge amounts of methane, a dangerously potent greenhouse gas.

Oil companies are also using dangerous chemicals to frack offshore wells near our beaches and seaside communities -- and they have federal permission to dump 9 billion gallons of wastewater a year, including fracking fluid, directly into the ocean off California’s coast.

And despite new state rules that were supposedly going to impose more transparency on the industry, an analysis by my organization found that Californians still aren’t being informed about fracking and other dangerous forms of oil extraction in our communities.

Meanwhile, industry spokespeople have reacted to revised federal estimates by vowing to find new ways of accessing the Monterey Shale’s oil.

Gov. Brown and state lawmakers must prevent this irresponsible industry from experimenting on our state with dangerous new techniques.

California needs a clean-energy economy -- not a statewide scramble for dirty fossil fuels that could wreak havoc on our air, water, climate and public health.

With the dazzling promise of sudden oil wealth revealed as a sham, the governor should have no more qualms about cementing his legacy as a visionary leader by halting fracking in California