

Hydraulic Fracking:

Anti-fracking protesters rally at Long Beach Civic Center

By Andrew Edwards,
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LONG BEACH >> Protesters, some costumed in white plastic mock-ups of hazmat suits, gathered outside City Hall on Wednesday morning to demand a halt to the oil and gas industry's practice of "fracking" offshore oil wells.

"Protect, conserve restore," the group of about 20 protestors chanted at one point as they gathered near City Hall, where the state Coastal Commission was holding a meeting. "Turn the frackers out the door."

"Fracking" is a slang term for hydraulic fracturing, which is the controversial practice of using a pressurized stream of water, sand and other chemicals to break up underground rock formations in order to facilitate the extraction of oil and natural



gas. While industry executives say the procedure is safe, environmentalists assert that the practice carries the risks of contaminating groundwater or increasing the probability of earthquakes.

Environmentalists wearing hazmat suits and carrying boogie boards protest "fracking" outside the Coastal Commission's meeting at Long Beach City Hall in Long Beach, CA. on Wednesday March 12, 2014. (Photo by Sean Hiller/ Daily Breeze).

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Dave Quast, of petroleum industry advocacy group Energy in Depth, said studies such as a 2012 assessment of the Inglewood Oil Field near the Baldwin Hills area of Los Angeles demonstrate the safety of hydraulic fracturing.

"That backs up 65 years of experience," he said.

The protestors chose Long Beach for the site of their protest because they wanted to influence the California Coastal Commission, the powerful body that governs development along the state's shoreline. The Commission is holding its March meetings in Long

Beach, although fracking-related matters were not on the agenda.

“We’re here to remind the Coastal Commission that it’s an extremely important issue,” said Hillary Audin of the Center for Biological Diversity.

Fracking has taken place in Long Beach since the 1990s, and state law signed by Gov. Jerry Brown requires state officials to create permanent regulations to govern fracking by the beginning of next year.

A bill carried by state Sens. Holly Mitchell, D-Los Angeles and Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, would halt fracking in the state pending further study of safety issues.