



Obama Administration Sued Over Gulf Of Mexico Fracking

Farron Cousins | January 12, 2015

At a time when the rest of the world (for a host of reasons) is shying away from the hydraulic fracturing “boom,” the United States appears to be hell-bent on allowing fracking in every available space. The latest target for the industry has been the already imperiled Gulf of Mexico, the same waters that are still reeling from the effects of BP’s Deepwater Horizon oil disaster.

In its haste to allow as much fracking as possible in the Gulf, the Obama administration has repeatedly failed to release information about the dangers of fracking in the Gulf of Mexico, as well as information regarding the total number of permits that have been issued.

But a new lawsuit by The Center for Biological Diversity seeks to make that information public.

The lawsuit says that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement are obligated to release this information to the public. The government has so far failed to respond to the group’s FOIA request to make this information known to the public.

The risks of offshore fracking are well known, and The Center for Biological Diversity has a report that details the dangers that have already been realized off the coast of California,



where offshore fracking has been under way for some time.

In that report, the Center uncovered some disturbing trends about the wastewater that is created during fracking:

Half of the oil platforms in the Santa Barbara Channel discharge all or a portion of their produced water, including fracking chemicals, into the ocean. The federal government has given oil companies permission to dump more than 9 billion gallons of wastewater a year into the ocean off California’s coast.

When wastewater is not dumped into the ocean, it is reinjected into the seafloor or transported for onshore underground injection. Even this disposal method can result in leaks. For example, 30 percent of offshore oil wells in the Gulf of Mexico experienced well casing damage in the first five years after

drilling, and damage increased over time to 50 percent after 20 years. Loss of well casing integrity is one of the main pathways for contamination of ground and surface waters.

The Center also found out that some of the common chemicals used in fracking operations pose a serious threat to marine life, and that spills or chemical leaks are occurring regularly on fracking platforms in California.

Again, the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem has yet to recover from the Deepwater Horizon disaster that occurred nearly 5 years ago.

Expanded fracking operations in the Gulf are an enormous cause for concern for the region, but the Obama administration insists on keeping the public in the dark. And as we see so often in American politics, if politicians refuse to release information, it is almost always because the information is less than comforting.