



## Second environmental group sues Interior over Calif. offshore fracking

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The Center for Biological Diversity has made good on its threat to sue federal regulators over hydraulic fracturing off the coast of California.

The group filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, accusing Interior Department agencies of rubber-stamping permits for offshore oil and gas development without considering potentially unique environmental impacts from fracking.

"Every offshore frack increases the threat to our fragile ocean ecosystems," CBD attorney Miyoko Sakashita said in a statement. "The Interior Department is turning a blind eye while oil companies frack wells and dump chemicals into our oceans. If the federal government doesn't halt this inherently dangerous practice, fracking chemicals or a disastrous oil spill could wreak havoc on marine wildlife and coastal communities."

The litigation comes just two months after the California-based Environmental Defense Center filed a similar lawsuit challenging 51 Interior permits for fracking and "acidizing" in the Santa Barbara Channel, where oil platforms' drilling plans did not address the enhanced production practices. In a re-

sponse earlier this month, Interior attorneys acknowledged that the drilling plans at issue were more than 20 years old but said the permits adequately weighed environmental impacts and incorporated public input (EnergyWire, Feb. 5).

CBD's complaint argues that Interior regulators violated the National Environmental Policy Act, Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act and Coastal Zone Management Act by failing to ensure that fracking activities were consistent with existing oil development plans in the Pacific Ocean. The nonprofit law firm is asking the federal court to order Interior to halt all permitting for offshore fracking until environmental impacts are studied.

Interior has been guarded with records about offshore fracking, but CBD claims the production process has been used on more than 200 wells in state and federal waters off California's coast. A 2013 media report found that offshore oil and gas drillers had used fracking at least a dozen times in California since the late 1990s (EnergyWire, Dec. 13, 2013).

CBD filed a separate suit last month seeking information about offshore fracking in the Gulf of Mexico (EnergyWire, Jan. 9). Attorneys for the group said they hoped success in the California litigation would address concerns about Gulf of Mexico fracking, as well.