

<https://www.courthousenews.com/trump-opens-another-730k-acres-of-california-to-oil-and-gas-drilling/>

Trump Opens Another 730K Acres of California to Oil and Gas Drilling

LOS ANGELES (CN) – The Trump administration finalized plans Thursday to open nearly 730,000 acres of public lands and mineral estate across California's Central Coast and the San Francisco Bay Area to new oil and gas drilling.

The move ends over five years of no oil and gas leases, after a 2013 legal challenge against proposed expansion of oil drilling operations resulted in a ruling that the federal government unlawfully approved extraction plans without adequately analyzing their environmental impact.

As part of the settlement in the case, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management agreed to complete an environmental impact analysis before deciding whether to allow drilling and fracking on public land across California.

No new drilling leases have been issued since 2013 and the agency has not held a single lease sale in the state since.

In April, the Trump administration [announced plans](#) to open over 1 million acres in the Central Valley to oil drilling and fracking. The Golden State is already one of the nation's largest oil and gas producing states with nearly 8,000 oil and gas wells.

Together with the Central Valley expansion, more than 1.7 million acres of land across California will now be opened to oil and gas leases. Thursday's plan includes drilling in Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Merced, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, San Benito, San Mateo and Santa Cruz.

Clare Lakewood, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity which filed the 2013 lawsuit, said in a statement Thursday that the plan is an "assault" on some of the Golden State's most pristine landscapes.

"Trump's new plan aims to stab oil derricks and fracking rigs into some of California's most beautiful landscapes," said Lakewood. "From Monterey to the Bay Area, the president wants to let oil companies drill and spill their way across our beloved public lands and wildlife habitat."

BLM spokesperson Serena Baker said in a statement the agency's plan also closes off designated wilderness areas and national monuments to oil drilling and fracking.

"The BLM has a multiple-use mission providing opportunities for economic growth with space for traditional uses such as ranching, mining, logging, and energy development as well as hunting and fishing," Baker said. "Public lands provide valuable, tangible goods and materials we rely on and use every day to heat our homes, build our roads, and feed our families."

Baker also said the plan fulfills the agency's commitment to a court order to prepare a thorough environmental analysis of oil drilling or fracking.

Federal law gives California Gov. Gavin Newsom 60 days to review the plan for any inconsistencies with state regulations. If Newsom finds irregularities

and decides to offer recommendations, and the agency rejects them, the governor can appeal the agency's determination.

A 2015 report from the California Council on Science and Technology found fracking in California happens at dangerously shallow depths that are close to underground drinking water reservoirs, leaching chemicals into water supplies that are dangerous to human health and the environment.

Voters in Monterey, San Benito and Alameda counties have passed ballot measures and backed county ordinances banning fracking and new oil drilling operations.