



WISHTOYO
CHUMASH FOUNDATION

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After Trump Victory, Lawsuit Seeks to Protect California Coast, Chumash Cultural Resources From Offshore Fracking

Offshore Drilling, Fracking Could Expand Radically Under New Administration

LOS ANGELES— The Center for Biological Diversity and Wishtoyo Foundation today sued U.S. officials for approving [fracking](#) in federal waters off California without sufficiently evaluating the risks. The suit points to offshore fracking pollution's threats to the marine environment, public health, imperiled wildlife and sacred Chumash Native American cultural resources and sacred places.

Today's suit follows Donald Trump's election victory, which may embolden Republicans to try to end the longstanding prohibition on new drilling off the California coast. Oil companies will likely push to drill and frack in federal waters near Malibu and Orange County and even as far north as Humboldt County.

"Federal officials' failure to carefully study the risks of offshore fracking is doubly disturbing after Trump's election," said Kristen Monsell, a Center attorney. "Every offshore frack increases the risk of poisoning our ocean, and that danger could now spread along our coast. Oil companies just dump fracking wastewater in the ocean, and we're swimming in it along with the whales and sea turtles."

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement decided to allow offshore fracking in California in May, after releasing a cursory environmental assessment of the practice. The assessment fails to fully disclose the chemicals and their effects on marine life and water quality, citing information gaps, yet it acknowledges that the chemicals can be hazardous. The assessment admits that offshore fracking will prolong offshore oil and gas activities, extending the life of aging infrastructure and increasing the risk of yet more devastating oil spills.

"It is beyond belief that the Bureaus failed to examine the impacts to the natural and cultural resources the Chumash maritime peoples depend upon to sustain our lifeways and connect with our ancestors," said Mati Waiya, Chumash ceremonial elder and Wishtoyo Foundation executive director.

The Santa Barbara Channel is one of the most biologically diverse seascapes in the world. It contains a vast array of habitats and marine life, including giant kelp forests and threatened and endangered blue whales, sea otters and sea turtles. The channel, home to the Chumash peoples for more than 13,000 years, contains submerged Chumash village sites, ancestral remains, traditional fishing grounds and historical tomol (canoe) routes still used by the Chumash, as well as sacred Chumash natural cultural marine resources such as kelp forests, dolphins, swordfish and abalone.

Today's lawsuit, filed in federal court in Los Angeles, asserts that the bureau's approval of offshore fracking without first completing an environmental impact statement violates the National Environmental Policy Act. The suit also asserts that the government's failure to consult with expert wildlife agencies to analyze offshore fracking's harm to threatened and endangered species violates the Endangered Species Act.

At least 10 fracking chemicals used in offshore fracking in California could kill or harm a broad variety of marine species, including sea otters and fish, Center scientists have [found](#). The California Council on Science and Technology has identified some common fracking chemicals to be among the most toxic in the world to marine animals.

Oil companies in the Santa Barbara Channel have federal permission to dump up to 9 billion gallons of produced water — including fracking chemicals — into the ocean every year.

The lawsuit seeks a court order prohibiting the federal government from approving fracking in federal waters off California's coast unless and until it complies with the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act.

The Obama administration could forestall expanded drilling off the California coast under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, which gives the president authority to "withdraw from disposition any of the unleased lands of the Outer Continental Shelf."

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.1 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

Founded in 1997, Wishtoyo Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit grassroots organization that enhances the well being of communities by preserving and protecting Chumash Native American culture, and the natural resources all people depend upon throughout California and the traditional Chumash range in Ventura, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. To learn more about Wishtoyo visit us at www.wishtoyo.org.