

California DOGGR Fracking rules deadline approaches

Dan Aiello, Examiner.com, 1-18-13

Environmentalists in California worry the public is not fully aware of the potential harm Governor Edmund G. 'Jerry' Brown, Jr.'s proposed hydraulic fracturing, or 'Fracking' oil extraction regulations could do to the state's regional water tables and fertile California farmland in the Central Valley counties of Kings, Kern, Maricopa as well as those in which the Monterey Shale Deposits are located some 11,000 feet below the surface.

Fracking is an oil extraction process used on depleted wells and heavy, tar-like oil deposits. Fracking involves the injection of steam, water, sand and rocket propellant into the ground to bubble to the surface the oil reserves. It is known to make fertile farmland barren and contaminate groundwater tables.

California's Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Regulations (DOGGR) are set to begin the proposed new Fracking rules in February, setting the stage for a proliferation of fracking operations.

California homeowners may have paid little attention when closing escrow to the "land and mineral rights" exclusion but according to realtor John Wiemayer of W. Anderson Realty in Bakersfield, "It's increasingly rare that mineral rights are sold with property," especially in counties known for oil, gold or other mineral reserves. "Those who own mineral rights rarely let go of them," Weimayer told the Examiner.

And it is that separation of mineral rights from property rights that worry environmentalists most because it has created a division between those who care what happens to the land and those who seek to profit from extracting the state's precious oil or minerals regardless of the cost to the land above or the groundwater below.

And California remains the only state in the union, and the only government in the world not to assess an extraction, or severance tax, on the removal of oil or other finite resources. The severance tax most recently proposed in a hostile legislature, would have generated \$1 billion dollars (at a 2011 production rate of some 240 million barrels annually) for monitoring a largely unregulated oil and gas industry and restoration, as in Louisiana, to environments decimated by the oil extraction, transport and refinement process.