

Environmental Activists Call for End to Fracking Plans at Long Beach Harbor

Stephanie Rivera, Long Beach Post, 10-8-15

Environmentalists marched through downtown Long Beach Wednesday morning as part of efforts to shed light on the use of toxic chemicals on 13 planned offshore fracking sites in the Long Beach Harbor and expose the potential dangers that come with the controversial oil- and gas-extracting process.

More than a dozen activists gathered at the Long Beach Convention Center and marched to Long Beach City Hall, some holding signs while others dressed themselves with Hazmat suits.

The use of hydraulic fracturing at those 13 wells has not yet been enacted, despite an approval granted to the THUMS Long Beach Co. by the California Department of Conservation's Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources, according to officials from the Center for Biological Diversity.

As part of the approval, fracking will be allowed only between August and December 2015.

Hydraulic fracturing includes the high-pressure injection of water and chemicals into an oil or gas reservoir to fracture the reservoir rock and allow oil or natural gas to flow back to the well.

Chemicals planned for the offshore fracks include caprylamidoprophyl betaine, which can cause high chronic toxicity to aquatic life, and potassium chloride, known to cause respiratory failure, renal necrosis (a kidney disorder) and death.

The THUMS wells that will be subject to fracturing are on a drilling island and "pass directly underground to the hydrocarbon formation without passing through ocean waters," Department of Conservation Public Affairs Officer Don Drysdale previously said.

According to Kristen Monsell, attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity, the islands were built in the 1960s and are about 20 years older than the pipes that burst in a Santa Barbara beach in May, spilling 21,000 gallons of oil.

"It's just an incredibly dangerous practice that doesn't belong in our oceans," said Center for Biological Diversity attorney Kristen Monsell. "Every offshore frack increases the risk of another catastrophic oil spill that we just suffered this past summer."

Monsell said the center plans to sue the City of Long Beach if it plans to act on these permits without applying for a coastal development permit from the California Coastal Commission to legally frack.

According to Kevin Tougas, oil operations manager for the Long Beach Gas and Oil Department, the city has been in communication with the California Coastal Commission regarding the 13 wells from the oil islands.

"Based on our technical evaluation with THUMS Long Beach of the economics associated with the proposed hydraulic fracturing projects, there is no current intention of implementing the permit," Tougas said. "The city is confident that proper safeguards are in place to protect the environment as our operations are very well regulated by several federal and state agencies."

Even then, Monsell said the center hopes the city considers the dangers associated with fracking and

abandons plans to move forward.

“It’s just an inherently dangerous practice that has no place in our ocean and no place in our land,” Monsell said.