

Feds clear California offshore fracking

Timothy Cama, The Hill, 5-27-16

Federal regulators ruled Friday that offshore hydraulic fracturing has no “significant” environmental impact off California’s coast.

The two agencies responsible for offshore drilling, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), finalized a pair of environmental study documents Friday regarding the impact findings.

“The comprehensive analysis shows that these practices, conducted according to permit requirements, have minimal impact,” BOEM Director Abigail Ross Hopper said in a statement.

The research by the agencies analyzed both fracking and other well stimulation techniques in the 23 offshore drilling platforms that have operated off California’s coast from 1982 to 2014.

“Potential adverse effects of the proposed action to the environment are not significant,” the agencies wrote in a Finding of No Significant Impact, a document required under the National Environmental Policy Act.

“Overall, most resources will not be impacted or impacts will be negligible. In some cases where impacts are somewhat more pronounced, such as with discharge of produced water, the impacts are minor, short-term and localized.”

The regulators started the analysis earlier this year in order to settle a lawsuit from environmental groups, who accused the agencies of being derelict in their environmental protection duties by approving fracking applications.

BOEM and BSEE stopped approving applications to frack during their environmental review. But now that it is complete, officials will resume consideration.

Environmentalists were not happy with the review released Friday, and said they’re considering reviving their lawsuit.

“The Obama administration is once again putting California’s beautiful coast in the oil industry’s crosshairs,” Miyoko Sakashita, director of the Center for Biological Diversity’s oceans program, said in a statement.

“Our beaches and wildlife face a renewed threat from fracking chemicals and oil spills,” she said. “New legal action may be the only way to get federal officials to do their jobs and protect our ocean from offshore fracking.”