

# AB 982 (Williams)

## Fracking: Groundwater Monitoring

### SUMMARY

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This bill will require companies fracking for oil and gas in California to monitor groundwater quality both before, and after any hydraulic fracturing. This bill will also require notice to the oil and gas supervisor describing the source, volume, and disposal plan for water to be used in fracking operations.

### BACKGROUND

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As the fourth largest oil producing state in the country, hydraulic fracturing is already widespread in California, occurring in at least nine counties: Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Monterey, Sacramento, Sutter, Colusa, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. However, there are currently no regulations to ensure the safety of the practice, and no required disclosure of where fracking occurs, what chemicals are injected or any testing for contamination. With the discovery of 15 billion barrels of oil in the Monterey Shale, fracking and other oil recovery techniques will likely become more widespread, especially in the Central Valley, Central Coast and Southern California.

Fracking has been linked to numerous environmental and health problems in other states, including water contamination. For example, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection cited Cabot Oil and Gas for contaminating water resources in Dimock, Pennsylvania. Additionally, fracking operations are strongly suspected to have contaminated drinking water wells in Pavillion, Wyoming, after water testing uncovered a chemical known as 2-BE, a chemical commonly used in fracking mixtures.

#### Groundwater can become contaminated with:

- Chemicals added to the hydraulic fracturing fluid, many of which are known carcinogens or are toxic;
- Heavy metals, naturally occurring radioactive materials or other naturally occurring contaminants which may be transported into aquifers;
- Hydrocarbons, such as methane or oil.

#### Fracking can contaminate groundwater in the following ways:

- Well-casing, construction or cement failure;
- Out of zone fractures;
- Natural fractures and faults.

The absence of baseline testing prior to fracking, however, has made proving the connection between fracking operations and water contamination difficult.

Increases in oil extraction in California pose significant threats to public and environmental health. With two high profile cases of potential water contamination, other states such as Colorado, New York, Alaska and Wyoming are moving forward with baseline testing and ongoing monitoring requirements.

The Division of Oil Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) has released the first draft of regulations on hydraulic fracturing, yet does not intend to require monitoring of groundwater quality.

A report submitted to the State Legislature by the State Water Board on February 4<sup>th</sup> indicates that more than 30 million Californians rely upon groundwater for all or part of their water supplies. Such heavy dependence on groundwater for drinking water and irrigation, calls for its protection to be a top priority.

### THE BILL

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This bill requires companies fracking for oil and gas to submit a plan for approval to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board that includes baseline water quality data, a plan to obtain water quality data near their operations, the proposed sites for monitoring and a plan for emergency monitoring in case of well failure. This bill also requires groundwater monitoring after fracking operations and public disclosure of all groundwater monitoring data.

The bill additionally requires public disclosure of the quantity of water an oil company plans to use, the source of that water and a plan for disposing of waste water.

### SUPPORT

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- Clean Water Action (Sponsor)
- Environmental Defense Center

### OPPOSITION

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- None on file

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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