

Calif. panel launches probe into offshore fracking

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In this May 1, 2009 file photo, offshore oil drilling platform 'Gail' operated by Venoco, Inc., is shown off the coast of Santa Barbara, Calif. The California Coastal Commission was set to discuss offshore fracking at its meeting on Thursday, Aug. 15, 2013. A recent Associated Press report found that federal regulators approved fracking off the California shoreline on at least a dozen occasions since the late 1900s.(AP Photo/Chris Carlson, File)

California regulators are launching an investigation into offshore fracking after revelations that the practice had quietly occurred off the

coast since the late 1990s.

California Coastal Commission staff member Alison Dettmer says the agency has begun looking into the extent of hydraulic fracturing in federal and state waters.

Dettmer says the potential risks are not fully known.

The practice involves pumping large amounts of sea water, sand and chemicals to break up [rock formations](#) to recover oil and gas.

A recent report by The Associated Press documented at least a dozen instances of [hydraulic fracturing](#) in the Santa Barbara Channel, site of a disastrous 1969 [oil platform](#) blowout that spurred the modern environmental movement.

The coastal panel discussed fracking Thursday during its meeting.

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