

Feds give thumbs-up to fracking off California coast

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An environmental assessment from two federal agencies released Friday determined that fracking off the coast of California causes no significant impact, thus lifting a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing that was instituted earlier this year.

"The comprehensive analysis shows that these practices, conducted according to permit requirements, have minimal impact," Abigail Ross Hopper, director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, said in a statement.

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement joined in the assessment, which analyzed well stimulation treatments on 23 oil and gas platforms off California's coast between 1982 and 2014, and came back with a "Finding of No Significant Impact."

The Center for Biological Diversity, the environmental group that filed a lawsuit that resulted in the moratorium, said Friday it is considering filing another suit in light of the agencies' decision.

"Offshore fracking is just an incredibly dangerous activity and we certainly wish the federal government was taking stronger actions to protect our oceans and our coast," Miyoko Sakashita, the director of the center's oceans program, told The San Diego Union-Tribune.

The [environmental assessment](#) looked at fracking - in which high-pressured fluids are pumped into a well to break through rock

formations to loosen oil and gas - as well as impacts from waste water that is disposed in the process.

Companies still need to go through the federal application and permitting processes to frack at individual sites.

Industry officials welcomed the Friday's announcement.

"Offshore energy is a vital source of jobs and revenue for both California and the U.S., and the sooner operations offshore California can resume the better," Randall Luthi, president of the National Ocean Industries Association, said in a statement, dismissing the lawsuit that led to the assessment as "hyperbole" from "extreme environmental groups."

The agencies' assessment looked into and oil and gas platforms on the Outer Continental Shelf, in federal waters.

Waters within three miles of California's coast are subject to state rules, which Sakashita said are stricter.

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