



California
STATE LANDS
Commission

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Betty T. Yee, *State Controller, Member*

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Commission Delivers Plan to Tackle Abandoned Oil Wells Leaking on California Beach

San Diego - Today, the State Lands Commission voted unanimously to take a critical step to remedy leaking oil wells at Summerland Beach in Santa Barbara County. Over the past few years, the State Lands Commission has fought to secure dedicated funding to remediate and properly abandon the Becker well and other leaking wells near the coastline in Southern California. The Environmental Impact Report certified today on a 3-0 vote is a major step that will make it possible to properly abandon and remediate the Becker well and other leaking oil wells off of the Santa Barbara and Ventura coastline.

“The State Lands Commission has taken yet another major step in cleaning up the irresponsible legacy of historic oil and gas drilling in California, which continues to impact coastal communities today,” said Lt. Governor Newsom, chair of the State Lands Commission. “Once again, California’s sustainable values move in contrast to the federal government’s destructive values. As President Trump tries to reverse the nation on a backwards path toward more coastal offshore drilling and fewer environmental safeguards, our action today ensures that California continues to stride forward to benefit future generations.”

At Summerland Beach, where the first offshore oil development in the nation occurred, there are hundreds of languishing oil wells that were never properly remediated. Oil from these old wells regularly appears on the beach and in the water. The Becker well was drilled in the late 1800s, when there was little or no state oversight. Virtually no records exist regarding the drilling and abandonment of these wells. Removal or plugging, if any, varied from well to well and involved rudimentary procedures that do not meet current health, safety, and environmental protection requirements.

“To the detriment of pristine beaches, coastal habitats, and public health, leaking wells are an unfortunate relic of now-defunct companies with no one to be held accountable,” said State Controller and State Lands Commission member Betty T. Yee. “I am pleased that my proactive work with the Legislature and the governor has resulted in today’s significant step toward properly capping the Becker well.”

The Becker well work is slated to occur later this year or early next year, depending on weather and tide conditions, and on securing other necessary permits. The work, anticipated to take three weeks, involves delivering and removing a cofferdam and other equipment and using a barge that will move to and from the Port of Long Beach. The Commission, as lead agency, is responsible for implementing the requisite mitigation measures to protect the environment and for ensuring that the well plug and abandonment work is consistent with the State Lands Commission's and the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources' regulations.

The Final Environmental Impact Report, Findings, Statement of Overriding Considerations, and Mitigation Monitoring Program for the Becker and legacy wells abandonment and remediation project are available [here](#).

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