



Igor Tregub
Councilmember District 4

CONSENT CALENDAR
MARCH 10, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Tregub

Subject: Resolution Opposing Bureau of Land Management Oil and Gas Leasing and Drilling on California Public Lands and Parks

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution opposing the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed oil and gas leasing and development on approximately 1.6 million acres of California public lands, including areas adjacent to Bay Area parks such as Mount Diablo State Park, Pinnacles National Park, Henry W. Coe State Park, and Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve; and refer to the City Manager to send a letter to the BLM Central Coast Field Office, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and California's Congressional delegation urging withdrawal of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements and cessation of all new oil and gas lease sales on California public lands.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On January 13, 2026, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published a Notice of Availability for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Central Coast Field Office Oil and Gas Leasing and Development program. Under this proposal, the BLM would open approximately 683,100 acres of federal mineral estate across 12 counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, Monterey, San Benito, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Fresno, Merced, and San Joaquin) to new oil and gas leasing and hydraulic fracturing (fracking). A parallel process through the Bakersfield Field Office covers an additional approximately 800,000 acres in south-central California.

The proposed leasing areas include lands directly adjacent to treasured Bay Area parks and open spaces, including Mount Diablo State Park, Pinnacles National Park, Henry W. Coe State Park, and Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. Due to the "split estate" nature of federal mineral rights, where the federal government owns subsurface mineral rights beneath state or locally managed surface lands, drilling operations could be authorized beneath or immediately adjacent to these protected areas, threatening their ecological integrity and recreational value.

This proposal directly threatens Berkeley residents and the broader Bay Area community in several critical ways:

- **Air Quality and Public Health:** Oil and gas extraction and fracking operations release volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, and hazardous air pollutants that degrade regional air quality and endanger public health, particularly for vulnerable populations including children, elderly residents, and those with respiratory conditions.
- **Water Resources:** Fracking operations require millions of gallons of water and generate toxic wastewater that risks contaminating groundwater and surface water supplies upon which Bay Area communities depend.
- **Climate Change:** The BLM's own Preferred Alternative (Alternative F) estimates that the Central Coast proposal alone would release approximately 660,977 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions over a 30-year project life, directly undermining California's climate goals and the City of Berkeley's Climate Action Plan.
- **Biodiversity and Habitat:** The proposed leasing areas encompass critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, and drilling operations would fragment wildlife corridors connecting Bay Area open spaces.
- **Conflict with State Law:** California's oil and gas setback law (SB 1137) prohibits new drilling within 3,200 feet of sensitive locations including homes, schools, and parks. The BLM proposal would allow federal lessees to circumvent these state health protections on federal mineral estate.

This item aligns with the City of Berkeley Strategic Plan goals to be a global leader in addressing climate change, advancing environmental justice, and protecting the environment, and to create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared city.

BACKGROUND

The BLM's effort to open California public lands to new oil and gas leasing originated during the first Trump administration in 2019, when the agency released proposals covering approximately 1.2 million acres under the Bakersfield Field Office and approximately 800,000 acres under the Central Coast Field Office. Environmental organizations, including the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, and Earthjustice, along with Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, filed lawsuits alleging that the BLM's environmental reviews failed to adequately assess the impacts of fracking.

In 2020, the administration auctioned 4,000 acres in Kern County, but development was blocked by additional litigation. In December 2022, a federal court approved settlement agreements that suspended all new oil and gas leasing across more than one million acres of California public lands until the BLM produced new, adequate environmental analyses.

The current Draft Supplemental EIS represents the BLM's attempt to satisfy those settlement requirements. However, environmental organizations and public health advocates have stated that the new analyses remain inadequate, noting that the 100-page review's conclusions that environmental and health impacts would be "minimal" fail to account for the cumulative effects of oil and gas development on regional air quality, water resources, and community health.

The public comment period for the Central Coast Field Office Draft SEIS closes on March 13, 2026, with a final decision expected by July 2026.

In 2017, the Berkeley City Council adopted a resolution opposing offshore drilling and fracking off the California coast. The current proposal presents analogous threats to public health, the environment, and community well-being on lands directly adjacent to Bay Area parks and communities.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

A resolution opposing BLM oil and gas leasing on California public lands and directing the City Manager to transmit a formal letter to federal officials is supported by the following considerations:

- The proposal threatens the ecological integrity of regionally significant parks and open spaces that Berkeley residents and Bay Area communities rely upon for recreation, clean air, and quality of life.
- New fossil fuel extraction is inconsistent with the City of Berkeley's Climate Action Plan, its declaration of a climate emergency, and its commitment to environmental justice.
- The BLM's environmental review has been challenged as inadequate by leading environmental organizations and was previously found deficient by federal courts.
- A formal resolution during the public comment period adds the City's voice to the record and strengthens the legal and political case for protecting these lands.
- Numerous municipalities, counties, and community organizations across California have opposed these leasing proposals, and Berkeley's voice as a leader in environmental policy carries significant weight.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

This resolution directly advances the City's environmental sustainability and climate goals. The proposed BLM leasing program would enable new fossil fuel extraction that is fundamentally incompatible with the City's commitment to addressing climate change. The estimated 660,977 metric tons of CO₂ emissions from the Central Coast proposal alone would work against regional greenhouse gas reduction targets. Additionally, drilling operations adjacent to Bay Area parks would threaten natural habitats,

biodiversity, tree canopy, and watersheds—all of which the City has committed to preserving and protecting. Adoption of this resolution reinforces Berkeley’s leadership in protecting the environment and advancing a just transition away from fossil fuels.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications to the City from adopting this resolution and transmitting the associated letter. Staff time required to transmit the letter is minimal and can be absorbed within existing resources.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative of taking no action was considered. However, given the urgency of the public comment deadline (originally March 6, and extended to March 13, 2026 due to issues with the BLM’s website), the proximity of the affected areas to Berkeley and the Bay Area, and the potential irreversible environmental harm, taking no action would represent a missed opportunity to formally register the City’s opposition during the critical public comment period.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments:

1. Resolution Opposing BLM Oil and Gas Leasing on California Public Lands
2. Draft Letter to the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Secretary of the Interior

RESOLUTION NO. [REDACTED] - N.S.**OPPOSING THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT'S PROPOSED OIL AND GAS LEASING AND DEVELOPMENT ON CALIFORNIA PUBLIC LANDS AND PARKS, AND URGING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS FOR THE CENTRAL COAST AND BAKERSFIELD FIELD OFFICES**

WHEREAS, The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published on January 13, 2026, a Notice of Availability for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Central Coast Field Office Oil and Gas Leasing and Development program, proposing to open approximately 683,100 acres of federal mineral estate across 12 California counties to new oil and gas leasing and hydraulic fracturing; and

WHEREAS, A parallel BLM planning process through the Bakersfield Field Office proposes to open approximately 800,000 additional acres in south-central California to oil and gas leasing, bringing the total proposed acreage to approximately 1.6 million acres of California public lands; and

WHEREAS, The proposed leasing areas include lands directly adjacent to regionally and nationally significant parks and protected areas, including Mount Diablo State Park, Pinnacles National Park, Henry W. Coe State Park, Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, and areas near Los Padres National Forest and the Pacific Crest Trail; and

WHEREAS, The "split estate" nature of federal mineral rights means that the federal government may authorize oil and gas extraction beneath or adjacent to state and locally managed parklands, threatening the ecological integrity and recreational value of these protected areas; and

WHEREAS, Oil and gas extraction and hydraulic fracturing operations release volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, methane, and other hazardous air pollutants that degrade air quality and endanger public health, with disproportionate impacts on low-income communities and communities of color; and

WHEREAS, Fracking operations require millions of gallons of water and produce toxic wastewater that poses risks to groundwater and surface water resources; and

WHEREAS, The BLM's Preferred Alternative (Alternative F) for the Central Coast proposal estimates the release of approximately 660,977 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions over the 30-year life of the project, directly undermining California's climate goals and the Paris Agreement targets; and

WHEREAS, California enacted SB 1137, establishing health and safety setback zones that prohibit new oil and gas wells within 3,200 feet of homes, schools, parks, and other sensitive receptors, and the BLM proposal would allow federal lessees to circumvent these state health protections; and

WHEREAS, In December 2022, a federal court approved settlement agreements suspending all new oil and gas leasing across more than one million acres of California public lands after courts found the BLM's prior environmental reviews inadequate; and

WHEREAS, Leading environmental organizations, including the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, Earthjustice, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, have stated that the current Draft SEIS analyses remain inadequate and fail to account for cumulative impacts on public health and the environment; and

WHEREAS, The City of Berkeley has declared a climate emergency and adopted a Climate Action Plan committing to significant greenhouse gas reductions, and new fossil fuel extraction on nearby public lands directly undermines these commitments; and

WHEREAS, The City of Berkeley's Strategic Plan includes goals to be a global leader in addressing climate change, advancing environmental justice, and protecting the environment, and to preserve and protect natural habitats, biodiversity, tree canopy, and watersheds; and

WHEREAS, In 2017, the Berkeley City Council adopted a resolution opposing offshore drilling and fracking off the California coast, establishing a precedent for the City's opposition to fossil fuel development that threatens California's environment and communities; and

WHEREAS, The public comment period for the Central Coast Field Office Draft SEIS closes on March 13, 2026, making timely action by the City Council essential to ensuring Berkeley's voice is included in the public record.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City of Berkeley strongly opposes the Bureau of Land Management's proposed oil and gas leasing and development on California public lands as set forth in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements for the Central Coast Field Office and Bakersfield Field Office, and calls upon the BLM to withdraw these proposals and refrain from holding any new oil and gas lease sales on California public lands.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Berkeley calls upon the BLM to honor the spirit and intent of the 2022 federal court settlement agreements that suspended oil and gas leasing on these lands, and to conduct thorough, adequate environmental review that fully accounts for the cumulative impacts of oil and gas development on public health, air quality, water resources, climate, wildlife, and environmental justice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Berkeley urges the BLM to respect and not preempt California's health and safety protections, including the setback requirements established by SB 1137, on all oil and gas operations on federal mineral estate within the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is directed to transmit a letter on behalf of the City Council to the BLM Central Coast Field Office, the BLM Bakersfield Field Office, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and California's U.S. Senators and Congressional representatives, conveying the City's opposition and requesting that the

BLM withdraw the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements and cease all new oil and gas leasing on California public lands.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be transmitted to organizations working to protect California public lands from oil and gas development.

Date

Bureau of Land Management
Central Coast Field Office
940 2nd Avenue
Marina, CA 93933

Bureau of Land Management
Bakersfield Field Office
3801 Pegasus Drive
Bakersfield, CA 93308

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Opposition to Proposed Oil and Gas Leasing on California Public Lands — Central Coast Field Office and Bakersfield Field Office Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements

Dear Secretary Burgum and BLM Field Office Managers:

On behalf of the City of Berkeley, California, I write to express our strong opposition to the Bureau of Land Management’s proposed oil and gas leasing and development program as set forth in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (SEIS) for the Central Coast Field Office and Bakersfield Field Office. We respectfully urge the BLM to withdraw these proposals and refrain from holding any new oil and gas lease sales on California public lands.

The Berkeley City Council adopted Resolution No. [REDACTED] on March 10, 2026, unanimously opposing the BLM’s proposal to open approximately 1.6 million acres of California public lands to new oil and gas leasing and hydraulic fracturing. This letter conveys the substance and intent of that Resolution.

Threat to Bay Area Parks and Protected Lands

The proposed leasing areas include lands directly adjacent to some of the Bay Area’s most treasured parks and open spaces, including Mount Diablo State Park, Pinnacles National Park, Henry W. Coe State Park, and Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. These parks serve millions of visitors annually and provide critical habitat, watershed protection, and recreational opportunities for the residents of Berkeley and the surrounding region. The “split estate” nature of federal mineral rights means that drilling

and fracking could occur beneath or immediately adjacent to these protected lands, causing irreversible harm to their ecological integrity.

Public Health and Environmental Concerns

Oil and gas extraction operations, particularly hydraulic fracturing, release volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, methane, and other hazardous pollutants that degrade air quality and endanger public health. These impacts are borne disproportionately by low-income communities and communities of color, raising serious environmental justice concerns. Furthermore, fracking operations consume millions of gallons of water and generate toxic wastewater that threatens groundwater and surface water resources throughout the region.

Climate Impacts

The BLM's own analysis estimates that the Central Coast proposal alone would generate approximately 660,977 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions over its 30-year lifespan. At a time when the scientific consensus demands rapid decarbonization to avert the worst consequences of climate change, authorizing new fossil fuel extraction on public lands is unconscionable. The City of Berkeley has declared a climate emergency and adopted ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets; new oil and gas development on nearby public lands directly undermines these efforts and the State of California's climate goals.

Inadequacy of Environmental Review

We note that the BLM's prior environmental reviews for these same leasing proposals were found deficient by federal courts, resulting in the 2022 settlement agreements that suspended leasing on more than one million acres. Leading environmental and public health organizations have stated that the current Draft SEIS analyses remain inadequate, failing to properly assess cumulative impacts on air quality, water resources, public health, and environmental justice communities. We urge the BLM to conduct a thorough, legally adequate environmental review before any leasing decisions are made.

Conflict with California Law

California's SB 1137 establishes health and safety buffer zones prohibiting new oil and gas wells within 3,200 feet of sensitive locations, including homes, schools, and parks. The BLM's proposal would effectively allow federal lessees to circumvent these vital state protections. We urge the BLM to respect California's democratically enacted health and safety laws and to refrain from authorizing operations that would undermine them.

Request

For the foregoing reasons, the City of Berkeley respectfully requests that the Bureau of Land Management:

1. Withdraw the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements for both the Central Coast Field Office and Bakersfield Field Office oil and gas leasing programs;
2. Refrain from holding any new oil and gas lease sales on California public lands;
3. Honor the intent of the 2022 federal court settlement agreements that recognized the inadequacy of prior environmental review;
4. Conduct thorough, legally adequate environmental analysis that fully accounts for cumulative impacts on public health, air quality, water resources, climate, wildlife, and environmental justice; and
5. Respect and not preempt California's health and safety protections, including the setback requirements established by SB 1137.

We appreciate your consideration of the City of Berkeley's position on this critically important matter. Our community stands with the many municipalities, counties, environmental organizations, and public health advocates across California who are working to protect our public lands, parks, air, water, and climate from the harms of new fossil fuel extraction.

Sincerely,

Mayor Adena Ishii and Members of the Berkeley City Council

cc:

U.S. Senator Alex Padilla

U.S. Senator Adam Schiff

U.S. Representative Lateefah Simon