



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Managing California's Working Lands

801 K STREET • MS-24-07 • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

PHONE 916 / 323-1886 • FAX 916 / 323-1887 • TDD 916 / 324-2555 • WEB SITE conservation.ca.gov

Fact sheet: Hydraulic Fracturing

? Neither the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) nor the California Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) have specific regulations for hydraulic fracturing.

? DOGGR received primary authority (“primacy”) from the USEPA for Class II injection wells under Section 1425 of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Class II injection wells use well injecting fluid associated with the production of oil and gas. However, fracking, which has been used by the oil and gas industry since 1949, is exempted from the Safe Drinking Water Act. To date, DOGGR has no evidence of freshwater contamination resulting from fracking in California.

? Through its Underground Injection Control (UIC) program, DOGGR regulates the production of petroleum and natural gas in California. DOGGR has regulations in place for enhanced oil recovery (EOR) utilizing steam flood and water flood injection. Any alternative methods for EOR – such as hydraulic fracturing -- would require additional regulations and/or statutes.

? Due to the ongoing natural gas drilling boom in the eastern U.S., some members of Congress are calling for more regulation of hydraulic fracturing. During the summer of 2010, USEPA conducted a “listening tour” to receive public comments about how to structure a forthcoming \$1.9 million study of fracking.

? In some locales, environmental groups have made a push that fracking should be considered as “injection,” and the well that is being fractured should be considered as a UIC Class II injection well. Other state regulators in the oil and gas arena have countered that hydraulic fracturing should continue to be considered as a “well treatment” not subject to UIC. If hydraulic fracturing were considered as UIC, it would bring in a host of review and testing requirements along with oversight by USEPA.

? Although companies are not required to report the use of hydraulic fracturing for well stimulation in California, anecdotal evidence suggests fracking similar to that used in the eastern U.S. is not common in the state. Fracking generally involves the use of significant amounts of water. DOGGR is unaware of projects using unusual amounts of water.

-- continued --

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING 2-2-2

? Fracking seems to be limited in California because: A) equipment costs are high and B) the state is not underlain by the massive shale formations where fracking is most effective.

? In California, fracking is occasionally used for a brief period to stimulate production of both oil and gas wells. Typically, fracking and techniques such as horizontal drilling allow operators to produce remaining resources and keep fields at or near their historic production levels. In other states with less permeable (tighter) rock formations, fracturing is used frequently and for longer periods, and is seen as key to producing any significant resources.

###