



CLEAN WATER ACTION

June 29, 2015

(7/7-8/15) Board Meeting- Item 5
Model Criteria for Groundwater Monitoring
Deadline: 6/30/15 by 12:00 noon



Felicia Marcus,
Chair, State Water Resources Control Board
and Members
c/o Jeanine Townsend
Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Model Criteria for Groundwater Monitoring

Dear Chair Marcus and Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft Model Criteria for Groundwater Monitoring in areas of Well Stimulation. On behalf of our many thousands of members and supporters, we submit this letter of support and recommendations.

We strongly support increased oversight over oil and gas operations within California. Well stimulation is a risky practice that is becoming more common. Failing to oversee and regulate the activities could result in disaster for California and its aquifers. All steps must be taken to ensure that we prioritize our precious water over increased oil profits, especially as the state and climate change are clearly making transitioning off of oil a priority.

We support the proposed changes to the draft model criteria that the Board has proposed. Removing the requirement that there be a 200 gallon per day yield from the definition of “protected water” is consistent with the reality that all water supplies are needed going forward. Additionally, providing Board staff with the flexibility to modify monitoring in a way that reflects uniqueness on the ground while still meeting minimum standards is practical and sensible.

While the monitoring criteria proposed in this draft should be finalized, the scope of protections should be increased. Well stimulation activities have the potential to impact aquifers at times other than the moment of stimulation, such as during the disposal of wastewater. As noted in the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory draft on 6/18/15, disposal of fluids from well stimulation presents great risk to aquifers.¹ The Board should take immediate action to prohibit the use of open and unlined disposal pits, as this disposal method is outdated and presents unnecessary risks to water quality. Underground injection wells also pose a risk to water quality and should require additional oversight from the Board in addition to ongoing activities, including the immediate closure of all injection wells operating in non-exempt aquifers. Additionally, as we have

¹ Esser, et. al., *Recommendations on Model Criteria for Groundwater Sampling, Testing, and Monitoring of Oil and Gas Development in California*, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, 23-25, available at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/groundwater/sb4/docs/llnl_recommendations_report.pdf (6/18/15).

recommended throughout the development of these criteria, ALL potential pathways for contamination should be monitored, including injection wells.

Thank you for promulgating these regulations, which are an important step towards protecting our drinking water supplies.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kyle Jones in blue ink.

Kyle Jones
Policy Advocate
Sierra Club California

Handwritten signature of Andrew Grinberg in black ink.

Andrew Grinberg
Oil and Gas Program Manager
Clean Water Action