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Legal Protest Targets Federal Fracking Plan Threatening Dams, Wildlife in Texas, Oklahoma

Oil Industry-induced Earthquakes Could Disrupt Water Supply for 440,000 Texans

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas— Conservation groups filed an administrative protest late Thursday challenging a Bureau of Land Management plan to auction off 4,300 acres of federal public land in Texas and Oklahoma for drilling and fracking.

The protest, which calls for the plan to be withdrawn, charges that the Bureau failed to adequately analyze the potential for oil industry-induced earthquakes, threats to dams and reservoirs from those earthquakes, and harm to air, water and endangered species, including the Arkansas River shiner.

“This dangerously negligent plan flirts with disaster for people and the environment,” said Center senior attorney Wendy Park. “Letting oil companies drill and frack near these dams and water supplies could trigger a catastrophe. The Bureau needs to heed the protests and cancel these auction plans now.”

The protest charges that fracking and underground injection of oil-waste fluid could cause more earthquakes in both states where oil industry-induced earthquakes have increased in both frequency and severity in recent years, damaging property and infrastructure.

Some of the parcels targeted for fracking in Texas are near or underlie dams for Choke Canyon Reservoir and Lake Texana — two of three major water supply lakes for the Corpus Christi Water Department. The department supplies water to Corpus Christi, 17 other cities, and more than 440,000 residential customers. Oil industry-induced earthquakes could compromise the dams’ integrity and drinking-water supplies.

The city of Corpus Christi also filed a formal protest this week requesting the permanent withdrawal of the Choke Canyon Reservoir parcels from leasing. The city expressed concerns about a “high risk” of water contamination and BLM’s failure to notify the city of the lease auction, despite the city’s management authority over the reservoir.

“No state has more oil and gas drilling than Texas, but drilling for oil and gas below our drinking-water supplies for major cities like Corpus Christi and Brenham is the wrong approach,” said Cyrus Reed, conservation director of the Lone Star Chapter of the

Sierra Club. “BLM should listen to conservation organizations, state officials, and nearby homeowners and cities and cancel these leases before they impact our drinking water or our dam safety.”

“With drilling and injection comes increased seismic activity and the possibility of damage or subsidence below these dam infrastructures,” said Rita Beving of Clean Water Action. “The BLM has not done an adequate job of evaluating the relationship of seismic activity to the lineaments and faults which have been mapped by a former oil and gas exploration geologist on these proposed parcels for drilling. Some of these lakes have already seen erosion on their earthen embankments. We cannot put water supplies or public safety at risk should there be a breach due to increased seismic activity.”

The Bureau’s plan also failed to adequately analyze the impacts of fracking, such as oil spills, on endangered species, including the Arkansas River shiner, whose critical habitat intersects at least one of the Oklahoma parcels. This small, ray-finned fish once thrived in the Arkansas River and its tributaries, but now has disappeared from more than 80 percent of its historical range.

Groups joining the protest are the Center for Biological Diversity, Environment Oklahoma, Sierra Club and Clean Water Action.

Download the protest [here](#).

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.2 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.