

Fracking: The Bay Delta Conservation Plan Would Provide Water for Mining

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By [Paul Rockwell](#), [San Jose Mercury News](#) | *Op-Ed*

"Will water pumped from the Delta be used for fracking in the Central Valley?" -- that troubling question appears in the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) weekly forum, "Your Questions Answered."

The answer is yes. According to the plan, fracking is a "reasonable, beneficial use" of water.

While New York state imposed a moratorium on fracking (at least to 2015), Gov. Jerry Brown -- applauded by the Western States Petroleum Association -- signed legislation that facilitates the fracking boom in California. Brown has already received \$2.5 million from oil and gas interests, like Exxon and Occidental Petroleum, in the state.

Is it really possible to reconcile conservation and fracking? You've got to be kidding.

The Delta Plan involves construction of twin tunnels to transport water from the Delta -- the largest, most endangered and complex estuary in the state -- to Southern California. It's bad enough to portray water diversions as ecosystem restoration, but it's downright obscene to accelerate a fracking boom in California in the name of conservation.

Fracking is an industrial process by which oil and gas companies inject massive amounts of water, laced with toxic chemicals and sand, into subterranean shale. The hydraulic pressure cracks open fissures in rocks and releases natural gas. Methane seepage, common in frack wells, cancels apparent climate benefits from natural gas. Methane traps heat at about 20 times the rate of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Every living thing depends on water, and one hydrofracked well requires about 3 to 8 million gallons per day.

According to Michael Kiparsky at the UC Berkeley Center for Law, Energy and Environment, fracking puts water supplies at risk, especially when developers drill through aquifers en route to gas reserves in shale. Frack water is so contaminated, water cannot be recovered, and the chemicals are left in the ground.

The plan also fails to even mention the dangers of fracking in the area known as Monterey Shale, so close to the San Andreas Fault.

There are connections between fracking and earthquakes, according to a *Los Angeles Times* editorial (Sept. 12, 2013) on "the danger of setting off seismic activity." *Science Magazine* (July 12, 2013) reports that "high pressure injection of fluids increases the seismicity of a region ... Injection-induced earthquakes, such as those that struck in 2011, clearly contribute to the seismic hazard."

Sure, fracking is good for business; it promotes growth. And that, after all, is what the BDCP is really all about. But "growth for its own sake," wrote Edward Abbey, "is the ideology of a cancer cell."

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