



Bottlenose dolphins in the Gulf of Mexico. (photo: PMarkham/Flickr)

Lawsuit Launched Against EPA for Approving Fracking Waste in Gulf of Mexico

By Center for Biological Diversity, 08 December 17

The [Center for Biological Diversity](#) filed on Thursday a formal [notice](#) of intent to sue the Trump administration for allowing oil companies to dump waste from fracking and drilling into the Gulf of Mexico without evaluating the dangers to sea turtles, whales or other imperiled marine life.

In September the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a Clean Water Act permit for new and existing offshore oil and gas platforms operating in federal waters off the coasts of Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. The permit allows oil companies to dump unlimited amounts of waste fluid, including chemicals involved in fracking, into the Gulf of Mexico.

"The Trump administration is letting the oil industry turn our oceans into toxic-waste dumps. The EPA's supposed to protect water quality, not help pollute the Gulf," said Kristen Monsell, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "It's time for the courts to remind this agency that its mission is to safeguard the environment and public health."

Thursday's notice letter highlighted the fact that the agency's approval of the permit without studying risks to imperiled species in the Gulf of

Mexico is a violation of the federal Endangered Species Act.

Fracking chemicals and other contaminants in produced water raise grave ecological concerns because the Gulf of Mexico provides important habitat for whales, sea turtles and fish—as well as being federally designated critical habitat for imperiled loggerhead sea turtles. Dolphins and other species in the Gulf are still suffering the lingering destructive effects of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Federal waters off Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi host the largest concentration of offshore oil and gas drilling activities in the country. Previous records requests revealed that oil companies dumped more than 75 billion gallons of wastewater into these waters in 2014 alone. Records also show that fracking has been on the rise in the Gulf of Mexico, and the EPA has failed to conduct any meaningful review of the environmental impacts of dumping fracking waste into the water.

In October the Trump administration announced plans to auction off more than 76 million acres of Gulf of Mexico waters to oil companies. That lease sale, which is scheduled for March 2018,

will be the largest oil sale in U.S. history. It includes federal waters off the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida and could vastly expand drilling and fracking in the Gulf.

"Only the courts can stop Trump's assault on our oceans," Monsell said. "Oil-industry pollution was already a problem in the Gulf, but this administration isn't even trying to protect wildlife from fracking chemicals. We need to fight back on behalf of marine wildlife."

At least 10 fracking chemicals routinely used in offshore fracking could kill or harm a broad variety of marine species, including marine mammals and fish, Center for Biological Diversity scientists have [found](#). The California Council on Science and Technology has identified some common fracking chemicals to be among the most toxic in the world to marine animals.

Today's 60-day notice of intent to sue is required before a lawsuit can be filed to compel the federal government to comply with the Endangered Species Act.