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Fracking Moratorium Bill Passes First State Senate Committee

Sacramento – A bill that would impose a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and well stimulation during oil extraction passed out of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee today, clearing the first of three committees that must consider it before the bill heads to the Senate floor.

The legislation, Senate Bill 1132, jointly authored by Senator Holly J. Mitchell (D-Los Angeles) and Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco), has been endorsed by a broad range of interests that include environmental and environmental justice groups, businesses, labor organizations, tribal groups, and community groups.

Once signed into law, the bill would impose a moratorium on fracking and well stimulation, require completion of an independent study of these oil extraction practices, establish a process for reviewing that study and sending recommendations to the governor, and then rely on the governor to determine whether to lift the moratorium.

Fracking and well stimulation, part of a relatively new class of extreme extraction methods, have been linked to air pollution, water pollution, soil contamination, and earthquakes around the country. The practice has been under increased scrutiny in California after reports of expanded use of the methods to tap into the Monterey Shale Formation that spans from Orange County to Fresno and to the coast.

Statement from Kathryn Phillips, director, Sierra Club California:

“This first vote on this moratorium bill sends a signal to Californians across the state: The Senate is listening. The legislators who moved this bill out of committee heard the public’s request for a time-out on fracking in this state.

“This bill, SB 1132, gives Californians a chance to protect ourselves from a wild-west approach that would allow extreme oil extraction methods to push forward before we have a fair chance to evaluate whether this is the kind of activity we want to encourage in this state.

“New research and evidence from around the country in the last several months have linked these extreme extraction methods to air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution and even earthquakes.

“We can dramatically expand clean energy and energy efficiency in California. But we can only do that if investment is correctly directed. Allowing harmful and extreme extraction methods will drive investment to dirty energy and leave the residents of the state left to figure out how to live with dirty air, contaminated water, permanently damaged farmland soil, and more earthquakes.”

Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the 13 Sierra Club chapters in California, representing more than 380,000 members and supporters statewide.