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## **Senator Fran Pavley and Assemblymember Das Williams Issue a Joint Letter to State Regulatory Agencies About the Disposal of Oil and Gas Wastewaters Into Illegal Unlined Pits**

**SACRAMENTO** — On March 3, 2015, Senator Fran Pavley, chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, and Assemblymember Das Williams, chair of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, sent a joint letter to the chair of the State Water Resources Control Board and the supervisor of the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) expressing their concerns about the recent revelation that hundreds of unlined, open-air, oil and gas wastewater pits in California are operating without adequate permits.

In the letter (a copy is attached), Senator Pavley and Assemblymember Williams state that these pits may be endangering groundwater resources, including drinking and irrigation water, as well as air quality. They asked the Water Resources Control Board and DOGGR to respond to numerous questions about the types of actions they are taking to resolve the problem and ensure proper regulatory oversight of these unpermitted pits.

“Regulatory accountability is not negotiable,” said Senator Pavley. “Ensuring the safety of the public and the state’s drinking water and irrigation water supplies will remain a top priority, and we will continue to closely monitor these regulatory lapses for as long as necessary to ensure all operations are in full compliance with state law.”

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While the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board has investigated the matter and issued enforcement orders against the illegal dumping of oil and gas wastewaters, including hydraulic fracturing (fracking) waste, the unpermitted and illegal disposal of such wastewater into many pits still may be continuing.

The unlined pits are yet another instance of improper disposal of oil and gas wastewater. DOGGR has been under increased scrutiny by the U.S. EPA for allowing the injection of oil and gas wastewater into groundwater used to supply drinking and irrigation water.

“This is another example of insufficient regulatory oversight of the oil and gas industry—oversight meant to protect our groundwater, wildlife, and the public’s health,” said Assemblymember Williams. “As the drought continues, I am particularly concerned about the impacts to groundwater, which is vital to California’s water supply.”

The letter represents an initial effort to understand the scope of this issue and the extent of possible public health and environmental impacts.

"It is past time for California to move into the 21st century and prohibit oil companies from dumping toxic chemical waste into open pits," said Andrew Grinberg, Clean Water Action's oil and gas program manager. "This disposal method and blatant disregard for water quality has no place in our drought-stricken state."

Both committee chairs are awaiting responses from the State Water Resources Control Board and DOGGR before deciding their next oversight actions.

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