

# Coastal Commission Attacked

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The battle for control of California's offshore waters continues this week, with a federal challenge of the state's coastal management program and the coastal commission, which administers it. Under the federal Coastal Zone Management Act, states receive federal funding to manage coastal lands and waters. A new draft Commerce Department report charges that the California Coastal Commission has "deviated substantially" from its federal mandate to balance coastal protection and development; that it has instead an antidevelopment bias.

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director Steve Barnes charged that the county's estimates of system installation costs are way off. He cited local estimates of more than \$2.50 per square foot, and added that the increase could keep some homebuyers out of the market.

Gary Jones, representing the local board of realtors, went even further, saying that fire sprinklers aren't that much more effective than smoke alarms, and do no good at all in external fires such as the one that recently destroyed many homes in Carmel. According to Jones it's "unfair for homebuyers to subsidize fire protection—fire departments are expected to take care of it." Local and state firefighter organizations are unanimous in their strong support of

The challenge to the commission is seen by many as an attempt to eliminate obstacles to offshore oil and gas leasing, a Reagan administration priority. If the coastal commission were eliminated, the Commerce Department would take over the federal permit process, which offshore drilling opponents say would give the oil companies a free hand in developing the coast. Both Republicans and Democrats in the powerful California congressional delegation have already joined forces in opposing any move to decertify the commission. They also warn against

such ordinances, which they say protect not only occupants but firefighters. Their experience shows that it takes as little as two minutes from the time a smoke alarm is activated for a building to be completely engulfed in flames.

Also taking a cautious approach to the ordinance was the Santa Cruz Area Restaurant Association (SCARA) which is concerned about a clause that would require installation of sprinklers whenever the use of a commercial building is changed. While SCARA president Charles Halliday said his group doesn't oppose the ordinance, they had many questions about how and when it would be applied, and asked for the 60-day delay.

any attempts to attach strings to the state's \$2 million 1987 program funding grant.

On another front, 13 local California governments are preparing to fight an oil company suit that challenges their local ordinances restricting any onshore facilities needed for offshore drilling. Opposition to the suit is being coordinated by Dan Haifley, of the Santa Cruz group Save Our Shores, who reports a high level of enthusiasm, "from the Republicans in Southern California all the way up the coast." The cities and counties involved plan to pool their resources to pay the necessary legal fees.

In another oil drilling suit, the state Lands Commission has voted to sue the Interior Department over its oil and gas leasing plans. California Lieutenant Governor Leo McCarthy and State Controller Gray Davis form the majority of the three-member panel, and they are supported by Attorney General John Van de Kamp. The suit charges that the federal government's studies on the environmental impacts of drilling were inadequate; says McCarthy, "Hodel ignored our criticism of his draft plan. We warned him it would increase air pollution, jeopardize environmentally sensitive marine ecosystems, and create the potential for a repeat of the disastrous 1969 oil spill off the Santa Barbara coast."

—Vicki Bolam