

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

AB 1536 (Addis) – As Amended April 15, 2026

SUBJECT: Offshore oil: pipeline safety

SUMMARY: This bill would require a public hearing on any requested exemption from the State Fire Marshal's (OSFM) hazardous liquid pipeline safety regulations; requires additional environmental review for approved regulation exemptions; establishes new safety requirements for pipelines that have spilled specified amounts of oil; establishes new leak detection and response plan requirements for oil pipelines; and, creates geographical restrictions on where specified oil pipelines can operate. Specifically, **this bill:**

1. Requires an application for an exemption, as specified, to be subject to a 60-day public comment period and, upon request of any interested person, considered at a public hearing.
2. Requires the OSFM to provide public notice of the application that specifies the period during which comments will be received and the date, time, and place of any public hearing on the application.
3. Requires notification of exemptions to be publicly available.
4. Requires that a project that has received a regulatory exemption be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as specified.
5. Requires an independent expert to conduct a risk analysis to prevent and reduce the amount of a potential oil spill on any new, repaired, or replacement pipeline.
6. Specifies the OSFM must require permanent abandonment of a pipeline if the best available technology is not achievable for a pipeline because of operational aspects, pipeline or regional conditions, or other factors.
7. Requires the OSFM to suspend the operations of any pipeline that is not in compliance with requirements of Government Code § 51013.1 by January 1, 2027.
8. Prohibits idled, inactive, or out-of-service hazardous liquid pipelines under the jurisdiction of the OSFM from being reactivated or operated unless all of the following conditions are met:
 - a. The incident spill volume was less than 10,000 gallons;
 - b. All repairs to the pipeline have been completed;
 - c. The pipeline has been retrofitted with the best available technology to prevent future spills from occurring and reduce the amount of hazardous liquid released;
 - d. The OSFM has certified that both of the following apply to the pipeline:
 - i. It underwent all required integrity assessments and testing; and,

- ii. It is in compliance with all applicable pipeline integrity standards and reporting requirements.
 - e. The OSFM, in coordination with the administrator for oil spill response in the Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response, to the extent coordination is appropriate, holds at least one public hearing in the affected county or counties on any proposed post spill pipeline operation or reactivation; and,
 - f. The operator has complied with any other conditions the OSFM has determined will ensure public safety and environmental protection.
- 9. Requires, for any idled, inactive, or out-of-service pipeline that has spilled 10,000 gallons or more of hazardous liquid, the operator to permanently abandon the pipeline in accordance with the OSFM's regulations as specified,, as well as all applicable Federal regulations, by July 1, 2027, or within six months of the pipeline's most recent incident, and requires the operator to restore the site to its natural condition no later than one year following permanent abandonment.
 - 10. Authorizes the OSFM to extend the deadline for permanent abandonment and the deadline for restoration for no more than one additional year, and make exemptions as necessary to comply with a court order.
 - 11. Requires an operator seeking approval for a new well, a production facility, and a pipeline in the coastal zone and under the OSFM's jurisdiction to submit a leak detection and response plan and obtain approval from CalGEM prior to obtaining approval for a new well, production facility, or pipeline.
 - 12. Requires the oil leak detection and response plan submitted for a new well or production facility to meet or exceed the requirements of Government Code § 51013.1 and its implementing regulations, except that the leak detection and response plan shall be submitted and approved prior to obtaining approval for the new well or production facility, and requires the operator to implement the approved oil leak detection and response plan, with best available technology, when the new well or production facility commences operation.
 - 13. Requires the oil leak detection and response plan for a pipeline under the jurisdiction of the SFM to meet or exceed federal regulations (Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations 195.452) to the extent not in conflict with federal law. Requires the oil leak detection and response plan to include both an internal computational method for leak detection and an external or sensory method for oil leak detection.
 - 14. Requires an operator seeking approval for a new well, production facility, or covered pipeline in the coastal zone to comply with the leak detection requirements no later than July 1, 2027.
 - 15. Prohibits any intrastate oil pipeline that has spilled 10,000 gallons or more of oil cumulatively since its construction from operating within a half-mile of a state park, a designated ecological reserve, or wildlife area of California, as determined by the Fish and Game Commission.

16. Provides that no reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to the California Constitution.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires, pursuant to Governor Newsom's direction, the Air Resources Board (ARB) to evaluate how to phase out oil extraction by 2045 through the climate change scoping plan, the state's comprehensive, multi-year regulatory and programmatic plan to achieve required reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. (Executive Order N-79-20)
- 2) Provides the State Lands Commission (SLC) exclusive jurisdiction over all ungranted tidelands and submerged lands owned by the state, and of the beds of navigable rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, inlets, and straits, including tidelands and submerged lands or any interest therein, whether within or beyond the boundaries of the state as established by law, which have been or may be acquired by the state. (Public Resources Code § 6301)
- 3) Pursuant to the Elder California Pipeline Safety Act of 1981 (Government Code § 51010 - 51019.1):
 - a) Requires the OSFM to exercise safety regulatory jurisdiction over intrastate pipelines used for the transportation of hazardous or highly volatile liquid substances.
 - b) Requires the OSFM to promulgate regulations as necessary to implement these testing requirements.
 - c) Requires any new or replacement pipeline near environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas in the coastal zone to use best available technology, including, but not limited to, the installation of leak detection technology, automatic shutoff systems, or remote controlled sectionalized block valves, or any combination of these technologies, based on a risk analysis conducted by the operator, to reduce the amount of oil released in an oil spill to protect state waters and wildlife.
- 4) Pursuant to SB 1137 (Gonzalez), Chapter 365, Statutes of 2022 (Public Resources Code §3280-3291):
 - d) Requires operators with a production facility or well with a wellhead in a health protection zone to develop a leak detection and response plan to be submitted to the Division of Geologic Energy Management (CalGEM) in the Department of Conservation no later than July 1, 2028, and fully implemented by operators by July 1, 2030. Establishes requirements for the leak detection and response plan.
 - e) Defines "health protection zone" as the area within 3,200 feet of a sensitive receptor.
- 5) Pursuant to AB 864 (Williams), Chapter 592, Statutes of 2015 (Government Code § 51013.1):
 - a) Requires pipelines to have the best available technology to reduce the amount of oil released in an oil spill to protect state waters and wildlife. Specify that best available technology include, but is not limited to, installation of leak detection technologies,

automatic shutoff systems, remote controlled sectionalized block valves, or any combination of these technologies based on a risk analysis conducted by the operator.

- 6) Establishes the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to provide a process to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided, and provides specified exemptions for wildfire risk reduction projects. (Public Resources Code § 21000 *et seq.*)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Author's Statement: "As President Trump moves to restart oil drilling off our state's coastline, Californians are in the direct line of fire of any environmental accidents that may occur. Our local economy and way of life depend on the health of our coastline. AB 1539 protects California's coastline by strengthening pipeline safety requirements and mandating that pipelines that spill 10,000 gallons or more are abandoned and decommissioned."

Equity Statement: "California communities have mounted decades of opposition against offshore oil and gas drilling and the accompanying harms and risks on their communities, cultures, natural landscapes, and economies. Communities living close to the coastline—including Indigenous tribes—are often hit first and hardest by spills. These spills have historically caused significant damage to wildlife and marine habitats, leading to long-term environmental and economic harm. During the Refugio Oil Spill, coastal tribes experienced damage to both environmental and cultural resources. Those living closest to the site of a spill, frequently low-income communities that are more likely to be located near oil and gas infrastructure, are more exposed to toxic chemicals during a spill. Over 150 million visitors a year enjoy California's coastlines. This doesn't just include people who live on the coast. Visitors from inland communities also travel to the coast to enjoy affordable outdoor recreation opportunities. The coastal tourism and recreation sector, their employees, and their clients must be protected from the threat of another oil spill from California's aging oil and gas infrastructure. During a spill, commercial and small-scale fishermen lose their source of income. This income loss can last for an extended period, putting them in a precarious financial position. Many of these workers may be immigrants or seasonal workers."

Oil Spill Disaster Response and Emergency Coordination in California: California maintains a multi-agency framework for responding to oil spills as emergencies that can threaten public health, wildlife, fisheries, transportation corridors, and coastal economies. The primary state lead for marine and inland petroleum spill response is the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), which coordinates containment, cleanup, wildlife rescue, and damage assessment. Depending on the incident, additional partners may include the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for statewide emergency coordination, the California Office of the State Fire Marshal for pipeline incidents, local governments, and federal agencies such as the United States Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency. California uses the Standardized Emergency Management System and Incident Command System so agencies can operate under unified command during major spills.

Past incidents illustrate the scale of response required. In May 2015, the Refugio Beach oil spill in Santa Barbara County occurred when a pipeline ruptured near Refugio State Beach, releasing

more than 100,000 gallons of crude oil, some of which entered the Pacific Ocean. State and federal responders established a Unified Command and deployed booming, skimming vessels, shoreline cleanup crews, and wildlife response teams. In October 2021, the Orange County oil spill released crude oil from an offshore pipeline linked to the Huntington Beach area, prompting beach closures, fisheries impacts, and a large-scale coastal cleanup effort involving multiple jurisdictions.

As noted by the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources:

[California] has more than 280 state parks covering 1.4 million acres; about 230,175 acres across ~135 ecological reserves of protected areas for wildlife and habitat conservation; and, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) manages more than 1.1 million acres of wildlife habitat, which includes 110 officially designated wildlife areas. There are 48 state-regulated (intrastate) pipelines in California that have each spilled more than 10,000 gallons cumulatively, but it's unknown how many of those pipelines or miles of pipeline this prohibition will cover. If the coverage is substantial, it could have meaningful impacts on the state's energy conveyance.

OSFM and PHMSA Pipeline Safety: The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) plays a central role in California's regulation of oil pipelines and related safety oversight through its Pipeline Safety & CUPA Division. According to OSFM, the division is responsible for ensuring the safety of intrastate hazardous liquid pipelines in California, meaning pipelines located entirely within the state's borders, including offshore state waters. OSFM is certified by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to inspect operators and enforce both state and applicable federal pipeline safety standards for these systems. Hazardous liquid pipelines may transport crude oil, gasoline, propane, and other hydrocarbons.¹ California has more than 5,600 miles of hazardous liquid pipelines that transport crude oil, refined products and highly volatile liquids around the state from production facilities to refineries and ultimately to market. The OSFM regulates safety of intrastate pipelines in compliance with federal law. Current law allows the OSFM to exempt the application of regulations to any pipeline when risk of injury is "remote."

California's jurisdiction differs from federal jurisdiction primarily based on whether a pipeline is intrastate or interstate. OSFM explains that PHMSA retains exclusive federal authority over interstate hazardous liquid pipelines, which are pipelines that cross state borders or begin in federal waters. By contrast, OSFM exercises exclusive safety regulatory and enforcement authority over intrastate hazardous liquid pipelines under California's Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Safety Act and its federal certification agreement. Other California agencies also have separate but related responsibilities: the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) regulates certain production pipelines and wells, the State Lands Commission (SLC) oversees offshore production activities within three miles of the coast, and the California Public Utilities Commission has jurisdiction over intrastate natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas pipelines.

Following the 2015 Refugio oil spill, California enacted requirements for Coastal Best Available Technology (CBAT) under Government Code section 51013.1. OSFM states that these rules apply to new or replacement pipelines near environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas in

¹ Pipeline Safety & CUPA, <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/pipeline-safety-and-cupa>

the coastal zone and require the use of best available technology to minimize oil releases in the event of a spill. Existing pipelines in those areas were also required to submit retrofit plans to OSFM. The regulations took effect October 1, 2020, and were later expanded to cover certain previously exempt low-stress crude oil pipelines. These authorities illustrate California's use of state police powers to impose additional protections on pipelines within its jurisdiction, particularly where coastal resources are at risk.²

As currently constructed, this bill would require additional procedural requirements for granting exemptions, require independent risk analysis for certain best available technology determinations, and establish conditions for reactivating or abandoning certain previously spilled pipelines.

Committee Amends: The author's office, in consultation with Committee staff, has decided to take the following as committee amendments that strike the original text:

SEC. 2. Section 51013.1 of the Government Code is amended to read:

(b) The State Fire Marshal shall require permanent abandonment of a pipeline if *within one year of a determination that* the best available technology is not achievable for a pipeline because of operational aspects, pipeline or regional conditions, or other factors.

(c) (3) The State Fire Marshal shall suspend the operations of any pipeline that is not in compliance with the requirements of this subdivision by January 1, ~~2027~~. 2028.

Double Referral: This bill was first heard in Assembly Natural Resources Committee on April 13th, 2026. It passed on a 10-4 vote with amendments that clarified leak detection and response plans.

Related Legislation

AB 1448 (Hart, 2025) requires the pipelines onshore or offshore to be certified by the OSFM as meeting specified safety conditions. (Senate Inactive File)

SB 237 (Grayson), Chapter 118, Statutes of 2025. Requires additional hydrostatic testing on offshore oil pipelines, among other things.

Arguments in Support: An environmental coalition with over 30 organizations write in support that "AB 1536 protects California's multibillion-dollar coastal economy. Over 150 million visitors enjoy California's coastline every year. Nearly 600,000 jobs and over \$42 billion in GDP rely on clean beaches and a healthy ocean. According to a 2024 National Atmospheric Administration report, coastal tourism and recreation produced 47% of GDP and 67% of the employment for California's marine economy. (By comparison, offshore mineral resources produced only 5% of GDP and 1% of employment.) The coastal tourism and recreation sector, their employees, and their clients must be protected from the threat of another oil spill that would devastate their homes, businesses, and livelihoods. Moreover, AB1536 addresses the need to prevent aging, corroded infrastructure from expanded or prolonged use when it should be retired.

² Coastal Best Available Technology, <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/pipeline-safety-and-cupa/coastal-best-available-technology>

Oil infrastructure has outlived its lifespan and presents significant ongoing risks. This bill requires strict environmental considerations prior to the reactivation of oil projects that have been shut down due to major oil spills or cumulative spill volumes from repeated incidents. It also protects state parks and other sensitive ecological areas by prohibiting the operation of such pipelines within 0.5 mile of those cherished places and the fragile ecosystems that exist within them. AB 1536 also contains stricter requirements for pipelines to use best available technology and requires suspension or abandonment of pipelines that do not use such technology. It's also about preserving coastal community culture, including sacred tribal lands, such as the recently designated Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. This sanctuary protects over 4,500 square miles of California's Central Coast and is the first tribally nominated sanctuary in the US. Californians remain overwhelmingly opposed to drilling off our unique and beautiful coast, just as we have for decades. We urge you to protect our precious waters, coastal communities, and economy."

Arguments in Opposition: Sable contends that "the Santa Ynez Pipeline System is an interstate pipeline facility subject to PHMSA's federal regulatory oversight. OSFM has no jurisdiction. Similarly, the Santa Ynez Pipeline System is not—and has never been— "idled, inactive, or out-of-service" as used by AB 1536. PHMSA has confirmed that, under PHMSA's regulations, the Santa Ynez Pipeline System is an "active" pipeline. Sable nevertheless opposes AB 1536 because the bill threatens existing intrastate pipeline facilities with long-held lease rights and risks forcing California consumers to rely on foreign oil imports at higher prices and higher costs to our environment. California is a significant consumer of gasoline, diesel fuel, jet fuel and numerous crude oil derivatives that require safe, domestic energy production to stabilize ballooning prices."

The Western States Petroleum Association writes in opposition, arguing "AB 1536 would impose new regulatory constraints on California's oil pipeline infrastructure at a moment when the state's fuel supply chain is already under significant strain. Consumers are paying the highest gasoline prices in the nation, and the Legislature's own energy agenda calls for expanding domestic supply—not restricting it."

The California Independent Petroleum Association argues in opposition of AB 1536, "as drafted, it would make the continued operation, repair, restart, and replacement of lawful energy infrastructure increasingly difficult, and in certain cases, impossible. For that reason, we believe the bill functions less as a safety measure and more as a pathway to shutting down offshore oil production and transportation in California. AB 1536 sharply limits the State Fire Marshal's current exemption authority, then exposes exemption requests to a 60-day public comment period, public hearing demands, and CEQA. That is not a workable framework for timely infrastructure repair, integrity work, or operational reliability. In the real world, delays are not a safety feature. Delays increase cost, uncertainty, and risk, especially for critical infrastructure that must be maintained and monitored in real time. The bill also extends best available technology requirements to new, repaired, or replacement pipelines near environmentally and ecologically sensitive coastal areas, based on an independent expert's analysis, and directs the State Fire Marshal to require permanent abandonment whenever that technology is deemed not achievable because of operational aspects, regional conditions, or other factors. That standard is so broad and subjective that it effectively becomes a veto power. It does not provide a realistic compliance path. It creates a route to closure."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

350 Bay Area Action
350 Humboldt
Azul
California Interfaith Power & Light
California Interfaith Power and Light
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Clean and Healthy California
Clean Water Action
CleanEarth4Kids.org
Climate Action California
Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas (CFROG)
Climate Reality Project, California Coalition
Clue-sb Environmental Justice Group
Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
Environmental Defense Center
Environmental Protection Information Center
Families Advocating for Chemical & Toxics Safety
Food and Water Watch
Fossil Free California Votes
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Get Oil Out!
League of California Cities
Los Padres ForestWatch
Monterey Bay Aquarium
Ocean Conservation Research
Oceana
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
SanDiego350
Santa Barbara County Action Network (SBCAN)
County of Santa Barbara
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
Save Our Shores
Sierra Club California
Sierra Club Santa Barbara Group
Stand.earth
Sunflower Alliance
Surfrider Foundation
WILDCOAST

Opposition

California Independent Petroleum Association (CIPA)
Sable Offshore Corp.
Western States Petroleum Association

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