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Water Injection Curtailed For 250 Eunice Oil Wells

Waterflood injections in 260 producing wells south of Eunice have been curtailed by the Oil Conservation Commission until the source of leaks, which have resulted in some underground water flows, have been located.

There undeniably will be some loss of production as a result of the order, according to Joe Ramey, local district supervisor of OCC, but, said he, "You can't weigh loss of oil production against loss of fresh water."

It is the possibility that injection water might invade underground fresh water that motivated the OCC order, he said, explaining it already has broken into an LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) storage well in the salt between 1,200 and 2,400 feet at the Skelly Gas Plant south of Eunice.

"There has been, as far as we can detect at this time, no contamination of fresh water," Ramey said. Water is being injected at about 3,600 feet, whereas fresh water lies in three strata between 80 and 120 feet, at about 400 feet, and, possibly some between 600 and 800 feet.

The area affected is about four miles wide and about six miles long, beginning six miles

south of Eunice, where Anadarko Oil Co. has 100 wells, Petro-Lewis Co. has 50 wells and Skelly Oil Co. has 110 wells.

The curtailment order has not been opposed, Ramey says, although production loss is expected. It may not show up, however, for several months, he said.

The effect of the order is to eliminate inject under pressure, limiting injection to the rate of withdrawal, which will be decreasing month by month. Injection without pressure, Ramey says, should allow any water flows to migrate downward, rather than toward fresh water levels.

He believes leaks are occurring in old wells which were improperly plugged, some of them as long ago as the 1930s.

"Some of them, we have no reports on, and some of them have plugs set at the top and bottom, with everything open in between," Ramey explained.

"All suspected wells will have to be examined," he said, indicating there are about 10 in the area, any one of which might be contributing to the problem.