

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation

BILL: SB 1582

INTRODUCER: Senator Richter

SUBJECT: Public Records/High-pressure Well Stimulation Chemical Disclosure Registry

DATE: March 30, 2015

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Gudeman	Uchino	EP	Favorable
2.			GO	
3.			AP	

I. Summary:

SB 1582 specifies that proprietary business information as defined in s. 377.24075(1)(a)-(e), F.S., and related to the high pressure well stimulation chemical disclosure registry or chemical disclosure submitted to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as part of a permit for high pressure well stimulation is confidential and exempt from s. 119.071(1), F.S., and Article I, section 24(a) of the Florida Constitution. The bill provides certain exemptions and noticing requirements for a person who files an action in a circuit court. The bill also provides legislative findings.

II. Present Situation:

Hydraulic Fracturing

Hydraulic fracturing is a technique that involves stimulating the well in order to extract oil and gas. Large amounts of fluid under pressure are injected into a wellbore to create and extend fractures in the rock formation. The fractures are held open by a slurry mixture which allows natural gas to flow from the fractures into the production well.¹

The injected fluid is composed of water, proppants, and chemical additives. The composition of the injected fluid varies between rock formations but the majority of the fluid, 98 to 99.5 percent, is water. The proppants are made of sand, ceramic pellets, or other small incompressible particles that hold the fractures open. The chemical additives include bactericides, buffers, stabilizers, fluid-loss additives, and surfactants that improve the effectiveness of the fracturing process and prevent damage to the rock formation.²

¹FracFocus Chemical Disclosure Registry, *Hydraulic Fracturing: The Process*, <http://fracfocus.org/hydraulic-fracturing-how-it-works/hydraulic-fracturing-process>. (last visited Mar. 29, 2015).

² *Id.*

The injection of the fracturing fluid is sequenced and the blend and proportions of the additives used vary depending on the characteristics of the rock formation; however, all of the additives are used during the fracturing process. The acid stage consists of several thousand gallons of water mixed with hydrochloric acid or muriatic acid that work to clear cement debris and create an open path for the fracturing fluids. The pad stage consists of approximately 100,000 gallons of “slick-water,” which is a friction reducing agent that reduces the pressure needed to pump fluid into the wellbore and facilitate the flow and placement of the proppant material. The proppant stage, which may include several sub-stages, uses several hundred thousand gallons of water mixed with varying sized particulates that keep the fractures open. Finally, there is a flushing stage that consists of enough water to adequately flush the excess proppant from the wellbore.³

Oil and Gas Regulation in Florida

The Oil and Gas Program in the DEP is the permitting authority for oil and gas wells under Part I of ch. 377.01, F.S. Section 377.22, F.S., directs the DEP to establish rules for the oil and gas program that ensure human health, public safety, and the environment are protected from the exploration phase to well completion and abandonment phase. The DEP is also responsible for monitoring and reporting the well drilling and production activities from exploration to well abandonment.

The DEP adopted Rules 62C-25 through 30, F.A.C., to implement Part I of ch. 377, F.S. The rules include permitting procedures, bonding requirements, well spacing, well construction, production, injection, workovers, and well abandonment. The rule also requires each operator to submit a spill prevention and cleanup plan pursuant to Rule 62C-28.004(2), F.A.C. The plan must include the potential spill source, the protective measures to prevent a spill, and the location of emergency equipment in the event of a spill.

The requirements and procedures for well stimulation technology is not provided for in rule or statute; however, hydraulic fracturing, acidizing, or other chemical treatments of a well are activities that may be approved in a workover. A workover includes a variety of remedial operations that are conducted in order to increase well production. Rule 62C-25.002(61), F.A.C., defines a “work over” as “an operation involving a deepening, plug back, repair, cement squeeze, perforation, hydraulic fracturing, acidizing, or other chemical treatment which is performed in a production, disposal, or injection well in order to restore, sustain, or increase production, disposal, or injection rates.” An operator is required to notify the DEP prior to commencing a workover procedure, unless it is for an emergency operation in which case the operator must notify the DEP during the operation or immediately thereafter.⁴ The operator must submit a revised Well Record to the DEP within 30 days of the workover.⁵

Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act

In 1986, Congress enacted the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), which requires federal, local and state governments to report hazardous and toxic

³ *Id.*

⁴ Fla. Admin. Code R. 62C-29.006 (1996).

⁵ The Well Record is the DEP Oil and Gas Form 8.

chemicals in order to increase the public's knowledge and access to information on chemicals at individual facilities. The EPCRA includes the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI), which is a publicly available database that contains information on chemical releases and waste management reported by certain industries. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not included oil and gas extraction as an industry that must report under the TRI because the EPA determined the oil and gas extraction industry is not a high priority for reporting. The decision is based on the fact that most of the information that the TRI requires is already reported by oil and gas providers to the individual state agencies and reporting for the hundreds and thousands of oil and gas sites would overwhelm the system.⁶

In May 2012, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published a proposed rule that would require companies that conduct hydraulic fracturing on lands managed by the BLM to disclose the composition of the fracturing fluid. Congress has also proposed legislation requiring the disclosure of chemicals under the Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals Act.⁷

To date, federal legislation has not been implemented to require the disclosure of chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing; therefore, many states have taken steps to develop their own chemical disclosure laws. The disclosure requirements that have been established in certain states include the information about the chemical additives and whether the disclosures are made to state agencies or available to the public, the composition of the chemicals, the protections provided in trade secrets, and when the disclosure of the chemicals is to take place in relation to the fracturing process.⁸

FracFocus Chemical Disclosure Registry

FracFocus is a national hydraulic fracturing chemical registry operated by the Ground Water Protection Council and the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission. The registry provides public access to reported chemicals used for hydraulic fracturing. FracFocus does not replace state governmental information systems but is used by ten states as the primary means of state chemical disclosure. Currently there are approximately 95,000 well sites registered with the database.⁹

Public Records Law

Article I, s. 24(a) of the Florida Constitution sets the state's public policy regarding access to government records. The section guarantees every person a right to inspect or copy any public record of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. The Legislature may provide for the exemption of records from the requirements of the constitution; however, the Legislature must specify the public necessity to justify the exemption.

Access to public records is also addressed in the Open Government Sunset Review Act in s. 119.07(1), F.S., which guarantees every person the right to inspect and copy any state, county

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Congressional Research Service, *Hydraulic Fracturing: Chemical Disclosure Requirements*, 2 (June 19, 2012), available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42461.pdf> (last visited Mar. 29, 2015).

⁹ *Supra* note 2.

or municipal record. The Open Government Sunset Review Act provides that a public record or public meeting exemption may only be created or maintained if it serves a public purpose. The Legislature created a number of specific exemptions from the Open Government Sunset Review Act, including documents submitted by a private party that constitute trade secrets as defined in s. 812.081, F.S., and are stamped as confidential at the time of submission to an agency.

Proprietary Business Information

Section 377.24075, F.S., defines “proprietary business information,” as information that:

- Is owned or controlled by the applicant or person affiliated with the applicant;
- Is intended to be private and is treated by the applicant as private;
- Has not been disclosed except as required by law or private agreement;
- Is not publicly available or otherwise readily ascertainable through proper means from another source in the same configuration as requested by the DEP;
- Includes trade secrets as defined in s. 688.002, F.S.;
- Includes leasing plans, real property acquisition plans, exploration budgets, or marketing studies; and
- Includes well design, completion plans, geologic and engineering studies, utilization strategies, or operating plans.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 amends s. 377.45, F.S., as created by SB 1468 (2015 Regular Session). The bill specifies that proprietary business information as defined in s. 377.24075(1)(a)-(e), F.S., relating to the high pressure well stimulation chemical disclosure registry, or submitted to the DEP as part of a permit for high pressure well stimulation is confidential and exempt from s. 119.071(1), F.S., and Article I, section 24(a) of the Florida Constitution. A person submitting the information to the DEP must request the proprietary business information be kept confidential and exempt, inform the DEP of the basis for the claim of proprietary business information, and mark each page of the document as “proprietary business information” to maintain the exemption.

The bill requires the DEP to notify the person who submitted a document marked “proprietary business information” if a public records request is made for the document. It provides the person 30 days after receipt of the notice to file an action in circuit court seeking a determination as to whether the document contains proprietary business information and an order barring public disclosure of the document. The DEP may not release the information if the action was timely filed until the pending legal action is settled. The failure to timely file an action constitutes a waiver of any claim of confidentiality, and the DEP must release the information as requested.

The bill specifies proprietary business information may be disclosed:

- To a governmental entity that agrees in writing to maintain the confidential and exempt status of the information and verifies in writing that it has legal authority to do so; and
- When relevant in any proceeding under this section. A person involved in any proceeding under this section, including, but not limited to, an administrative law judge, a hearing officer, or a judge or justice, must maintain the confidentiality of information revealed at the proceeding.

The bill specifies the public records exemption created by the bill is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act in accordance with s. 119.15, F.S., and expires on October 2, 2020, unless reenacted by the Legislature.

Section 2 creates an undesignated section of law to provide legislative findings. The bill finds it is a public necessity that proprietary business information related to high pressure well stimulations provided to the DEP by the applicant be made confidential and exempt from s 119.15, F.S, and Article I, section 24(a) of the Florida Constitution. The bill further specifies the information must remain confidential to avoid providing an unfair advantage to competitors and to avoid other entities from using the information without compensating or reimbursing the entity whose information was not made confidential and exempt.

Section 3 provides the act will take effect on the same date that SB 1468 or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

The bill provides an exemption from Article I, section 24 (a) of the Florida Constitution for proprietary business information related to chemicals and other constituents in high pressure well stimulation.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill protects proprietary business information, which may provide a financial benefit to private companies engaged in high pressure well stimulation.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

The definition of “proprietary business information” in s. 377.24075(1)(a)-(e), F.S., is for proprietary business information with respect to an application for a natural gas storage facility permit. Certain parts of the definition may not apply to proprietary business information with respect to high pressure well stimulation.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 377.45 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.