



JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
OFFICE OF CONSERVATION

THOMAS F. HARRIS
SECRETARY

MONIQUE M. EDWARDS
COMMISSIONER OF CONSERVATION

September 29, 2023

Dear Resident,

Recently Governor John Bel Edwards and I, issued emergency declarations relative to the Sulphur Mine Salt Dome. This letter is to provide you information about what prompted these declarations and the steps we are taking.

The Office of Conservation (OOC) Injection and Mining Division's primary concern is focused on the brine cavern known as PPG-7, a cavern on the west side of the salt dome, operated by Westlake US 2 LLC. The core issue is the PPG-7 cavern is unable to maintain a stable pressure without the constant pumping of salt water into it. The OOC staff has documented a number of instances over the central and western areas of the salt dome where natural gas is bubbling up to the surface in water bodies and near wellheads. In addition, at least one oil seep has been detected and initial subsidence monitoring of the area has revealed a potential acceleration of the subsidence. The nearby PPG-6 cavern, also operated by Westlake, is also being closely monitored due to its proximity to PPG-7.

While these operations are located on the western-to-northwestern side of the dome, furthest away from where most homeowners in the area are, we want to make sure every action is taken to inform the nearby communities. As more information is developed and there is significant deterioration of the situation, we will forewarn you that a more immediate threat to public safety is present.

While nothing we are seeing currently suggests that there is an immediate risk of major structural failure of a cavern of the nature of what was experienced at Bayou Corne in Assumption Parish in 2012 (the gas bubble sites are far less numerous and severe than what was observed then and there have been no reports of seismic activity strong enough to be felt at surface as was the case then), we felt that an emergency declaration was the prudent thing to do in order to establish regulatory flexibility and funding to take the next steps to protect the residents and the environment in the area.

Though a more significant surface impact has not yet manifested, we have reason to believe markers leading to that might be imminent. The intended use of the emergency authority is for OOC to take action itself or direct action by operators to further understand what is happening and mitigate potential impacts. The action by OOC would be to access funding sources and reimbursement options to allow Conservation to contract with experts in fields such as rock mechanics, modeling of salt structures and hydrology. Further, the emergency authority gives us the opportunity to apply the best science to get a picture of what is happening deep underground now and what steps may be taken to mitigate a potential structural failure, and other impacts. All we have today is guesses and no data to make informed decisions.

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So what does this mean for you right now? Stay in contact with OOC through our Communications Office under Director Patrick Courreges, who may be reached at patrick.courreges@la.gov or 225-342-0510 or Mr. Bryan Beam, Calcasieu Parish Administrator, (337) 721-3500 or administration@calcasieu.gov. We have also set up a dedicated webpage for information on the dome that will be updated on a regular basis. It is located at <https://www.dnr.louisiana.gov/SulphurMines>. Our goal is to keep you the resident, informed with timely and accurate information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Monique M. Edwards". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Monique M. Edwards
Commissioner of Conservation