

**Features****Texas Lawmakers Weigh Funding for Quake Monitors**

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A bill to fund a network of 55 earthquake sensors known as TexNet got its first public hearing Monday before members of a Texas state legislative committee in Austin.

Texas House Bill 2819 would provide \$3.4 million for the network, which was installed two years ago to allow researchers to gather data about a possible link between earthquakes and oil and natural gas drilling and disposal.

Wastewater disposal wells have been linked to several years of increased earthquake activity in Oklahoma (OD Mar.2'17).

Some legislators have said they cannot support the request, filed by state Rep. Drew Darby (R-Midland), pointing out that the global oil industry downturn has had a major impact on state revenues and any spending must be prioritized.

The Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas at Austin started the program and said that without the funding it will be almost impossible to activate the network and conduct any research.

Two years ago, Texas lawmakers approved \$4.47 million for TexNet, but no funding was allocated to make it operational on a long-term basis. Of that funding, \$2.47 million was for equipment and \$2 million to study the results.

The array itself consists of 22 permanent seismographs and 33 mobile devices that can be relocated as needed.

Darby is chairman of the House Energy Resources Committee, which held hearings Monday on the bill. Ed Longanecker, president of the Texas Independent Producers & Royalty Owners Association, was scheduled to speak in favor of the bill during Monday's hearing.

In June 2015, the Texas Railroad Commission held hearings to determine if minor quakes near the towns of Azle and Reno were linked to wastewater disposal wells (OD Jun.12'15).

The commission now has rules in place that require companies to conduct seismic tests before applying for disposal well permits (OD Aug.15'14).

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