



CARPINTERIA VALLEY ASSOCIATION



CITIZENS FOR THE CARPINTERIA BLUFFS

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CITY OF CARPINTERIA ASKS COURT TO REVIEW THE LEGALITY OF VENOCO'S OIL DRILLING INITIATIVE

Santa Barbara, CA – For the past three years, the Environmental Defense Center, Carpinteria Valley Association, Citizens for the Carpinteria Bluffs, Get Oil Out! and the Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter, along with hundreds of Carpinteria residents, have participated in the City of Carpinteria's review of the proposed Venoco oil drilling project known as "Paredon."

On February 2, 2009, Venoco, Inc. notified the City of Carpinteria that the company intended to circulate an initiative petition regarding the proposed Paredon oil drilling project. Although it pretends otherwise, Venoco's initiative would completely circumvent the City's normal public planning and environmental review processes, and would deny the community access to critical information. It would discourage informed public dialogue and community engagement, vital and necessary components of any planning process. In addition, the oil company has drafted an initiative that violates the California Constitution and a host of other state laws. The City is charged with upholding the law and preserving the public welfare, and Carpinteria officials acted responsibly when they requested a judicial ruling on the legality and appropriateness of Venoco's oil drilling initiative.

The Carpinteria City Attorney's complaint lists six causes of action against Venoco, including charges that the initiative contains provisions that are unconstitutional and illegal under state law. For example, voter initiatives may only propose legislative, or law-making, acts; administrative acts, such as issuing development permits, may not be proposed by voter initiative. The complaint further describes how the initiative is inconsistent with Carpinteria's General Plan, how the initiative is "unconstitutionally vague, misleading and contains false statements," how it

conflicts with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and how it would “impair essential government functions” of the City of Carpinteria.

None of the City’s claims impedes or disparages public involvement or community decision-making; the City is actually working to protect these citizen’s rights. Further, the City’s complaint does not pass judgment on the proposed Paredon oil drilling project. The Santa Barbara Superior Court will consider Carpinteria’s position in April.

Documents prepared for the City, including an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), describe the project as requiring a 175’ drilling rig operating 24/7. The rig would be situated between City Hall and the Carpinteria harbor seal sanctuary, and between the Arbol Verde neighborhood and the Carpinteria Bluffs Preserve. The City’s EIR identifies 11 significant and unavoidable environmental and community impacts that would emanate from the project, including releases of toxic and hazardous substances and a fundamental change to the visual character of our highly scenic coastline.

The City has requested revisions and additions to the Paredon EIR, including further analysis of noise impacts. Venoco’s initiative would terminate this review and bypass the safeguards that are part and parcel of the City’s normal permit processes. Completion of the City’s environmental review process, including full disclosure of project impacts and subsequent public engagement, is critical to democratic decision-making.

We strongly support the City in its review of the proposed Paredon project and Venoco’s Oil Drilling Initiative. Any attempt at circumventing the legal process should be denied.

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The Environmental Defense Center protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action and works primarily within Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties. Since 1977, EDC has empowered community based organizations to advance environmental protection. Program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health.

The Carpinteria Valley Association (CVA) was founded in 1964, and continues its mission to preserve and enhance the rural beauty of the Carpinteria Valley, especially its open field agriculture, and to maintain the charm of Carpinteria and Summerland as small beach towns. CVA strives to accomplish these goals by providing education and advocacy on issues related to land use, planning, and community development with an emphasis on the natural resources and environment of the Carpinteria Valley, Summerland and the surrounding region.

Citizens For The Carpinteria Bluffs works to preserve forever the Carpinteria Bluffs as open space. Citizens For The Carpinteria Bluffs uses educational and promotional activities to raise public knowledge and appreciation of the Bluffs and its natural resources. Citizens aims to ensure that the Bluffs remain an area for active and passive recreation.