



# PRESS RELEASE

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**Contact:**

Brian Segee, Staff Attorney, 805.963.1622

## **CLOSURE OF CHEMICAL FACILITY IS GOOD NEWS FOR VENTURA RIVER**

### **Closure of Multi-Chem Group LLC's Ventura Facility Catalyzed by EDC Clean Water Act Enforcement Action**

**Ventura, CA** – The Environmental Defense Center (“EDC”) welcomes the November 2012 closure of the Multi-Chem chemical storage and mixing facility, which was a dangerous and inappropriately sited chemical business located directly on the banks of the Ventura River, approximately four miles from the Pacific Ocean. The closure, required under the terms of a June 2012 Compliance Agreement reached between Multi-Chem and the County of Ventura, occurred approximately a year and half after Multi-Chem LLC and EDC reached a July 2011 legal settlement agreement resolving EDC allegations that the facility’s storm water management practices were violating requirements of the federal Clean Water Act. Multi-Chem was acquired last year by Halliburton, the nation’s second largest oil-services company, in order to expand the breadth of Halliburton’s services, particularly with respect to hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking.”

“Although Multi-Chem acted in good faith to resolve Clean Water Act issues at the site in its settlement agreement with EDC, the Ventura River floodplain is ultimately a very poor location for siting a chemical storage and mixing business,” stated Brian Segee, Staff Attorney with EDC. “Closure of this facility benefits the environmental health of the Ventura River watershed and the residents living in nearby neighborhoods.”

Prior to EDC’s legal action, the facility had uniformly failed to meet Clean Water Act permit monitoring and reporting requirements, and had likely been illegally discharging pollutants including total suspended solids, oil and grease, toxic chemicals, and metals for many years. These pollutants were released directly into the Ventura River, degrading water quality and habitat value. In the wake of EDC’s legal action and subsequent settlement, the implementation of which required some County approvals, the County discovered numerous additional legal violations that ultimately led to Multi-Chem entering into the Compliance Agreement requiring the facility to shut down and abandon the site.

Specifically, County staff discovered that Multi-Chem was violating numerous County zoning, building, fire, and floodplain ordinances, and had systematically failed to obtain required permits from the Ventura County Resource Management Agency (for installation of chemical storage tanks, equipment, and other infrastructure), Ventura County Fire Protection District (for storage and use of chemicals), and Ventura County Watershed Protection District (for development and redevelopment within the Ventura River flood plain).

The Ventura River and its tributaries drain the 235 square-mile Ventura River Watershed;

906 Garden Street Santa Barbara, CA 93101 (805)963-1622 FAX (805)962-3152

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approximately half of this watershed lies within the Los Padres National Forest. The River empties at the County's most popular surf break, Surfers' Point (aka C Street), and is home to a number of endangered species including the tidewater goby, red-legged frog, arroyo toad, and Southern California steelhead.

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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.*