



## SPRING 2018 NEWSLETTER

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### ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS OIL

Santa Barbara County faces a massive increase in oil production! If ERG, Aera, and PetroRock get their way, there could soon be 750 new oil wells in the Cat Canyon area southeast of Santa Maria. What's more, these are not conventional oil wells, but would utilize dirtier and more dangerous extraction processes such as cyclic steam injection, steam flooding, and acidization. EDC and our client, Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter, have no intention of sitting by and letting this happen.

Like acidization, cyclic steam injection and steam flooding are energy-intensive methods that are among the very worst oil production techniques we have seen anywhere. They involve super-heating enormous quantities of water to around 500 degrees, pumping it underground at high pressure to loosen up oil which is then sucked up to the surface. Unfortunately, the climate implications alone are enough of a reason to be concerned, as these procedures are much more carbon intensive and climate-damaging than conventional oil drilling. They also require massive quantities of water and often have a high well failure rate, resulting in oil seeps and contaminated groundwater aquifers.

Back in 2016, another oil company, Pacific Coast Energy Company (PCEC), attempted to add 144 of these alarming steam injection wells near Orcutt, but EDC and our clients were able to stop that project. After EDC uncovered PCEC's long history of spills and oil seeps in the area, the County denied the project and required the company to do more to clean up its site. But oil is a dirty business and this is not the end of that story. EDC and our co-counsel at Lozeau Drury, LLP recently notified PCEC that we intend to sue for violations of the Clean Water Act, as the company's polluted runoff has been draining into local creeks, and from there into the Santa Maria River and the ocean.

The easy-to-access oil is all but gone across our region. Unfortunately, instead of helping transition us to expanded renewable sources of power, the energy industry is pursuing more dangerous techniques to scrape the last drops of oil from beneath our feet. As the climate changes and we approach the beginning of our 8th year of drought, it is essential we stop this dangerous push by "big oil" to approve its riskiest oil projects. We must stop looking to the past for our energy needs, but rather embrace a cleaner, healthier, and safer future of renewable power.



# TRUMP TARGETS THE SANTA BARBARA CHANNEL

In January, the Trump Administration made good on threats to try and open more than 90% of our nation's coast to new oil and gas drilling. And while this proposed plan puts the entire California coast at risk, the fact is that our local coastline is wearing the bulls-eye. The Santa Barbara Channel is the only part of this 1,100-mile stretch where the oil industry has specifically registered support for new oil drilling. If Trump gets his way, this will be the first time that oil leases were successfully sold here since Ronald Reagan was president.

Conventional oil drilling in the precious waters off our coast is a considerable threat on its own, but it is hardly the only option for the oil and gas industry in the Channel. Over the years, oil companies have expanded their operations, moving to fracking and acidizing to increase the flow of hydrocarbons. While EDC continues our lawsuit against federal agencies for insufficient permitting practices for these dangerous technologies, there is no question that new oil leases will quickly lead to the expansion of these risky extraction techniques.

There is too much at stake to allow more oil drilling off our coast. The Santa Barbara Channel is a special place, often referred to as the Galapagos of North America due to its ecological diversity. Not only does the Channel provide excellent opportunities for fisheries, tourism, and recreation, it is also an important migratory route and feeding area for endangered blue, humpback, and fin whales, southern sea otters, and many other threatened and endangered species. It is also our home, and the site of some of the most beloved and environmentally important coastal open space left in the country.

Here along the Central Coast, residents are all too familiar with the risks posed by offshore oil drilling. Starting with the tragic Santa Barbara Oil Spill of 1969 through the Refugio Oil Spill of 2015, our communities have experienced devastating spill after spill. We know that with oil and accidents, it is never a question of if, but rather when, disaster will strike.

## THREATS TO OUR MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Years ago, EDC helped lead the regional conservation community through a process which resulted in the creation of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) around the Channel Islands. Later, we helped establish additional MPAs along Santa Barbara's mainland coast. MPAs, providing safety for thousands of marine plants and animals, also support diverse recreational opportunities for swimming, diving, boating, kayaking, nature watching, and limited fishing. Protecting these underwater parks and the critical habitat they hold continues to be a top priority for EDC and this community. Unfortunately, the Trump plan puts this critical network at risk from spilled oil, polluted water, chemical discharges, and other serious threats.

## SUPPORT FROM SACRAMENTO

State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson and Assemblymember Monique Limon have introduced bills in their respective houses to prohibit the State of California from approving any leases facilitating new oil development in federal waters. Essentially, this means while California can't stop new federal leases from being sold, these bills would prohibit oil companies from building new pipelines, piers, or other structures to carry any oil from these leases through State waters for onshore processing, storage, and refining. EDC is working closely with legislative leaders and partner organizations to ensure passage of these important bills.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO?

- For more information and updates, sign up for EDC's periodic email alerts at [EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org](https://www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org).
- Download the "Click My Cause" app for your mobile phone for simple one-click legislative actions.
- Stay tuned later this year for opportunities to send comments on the draft plan.





Photo: Brian Trautwein

### PUENTE OF REASONS TO CELEBRATE

This spring EDC, our clients, and our impressive list of partners celebrated a major step towards defeating NRG's proposal to build the Puente Power Plant on Oxnard's coast. While we await a formal denial or withdrawal of the project, it is now widely considered dead given the recent approval of a transmission line upgrade and renewable energy alternatives to meet the area's local energy needs. EDC and our clients were the first formal intervenors in the fight before the California Energy Commission where we successfully argued that the project's environmental impacts to Oxnard's coast, such as protected animals and plants, habitat, coastal wetlands, and air pollution, were significant and unmitigated.



Photo: Linda Krop

### PAREDON BE GONE

For almost 20 years, EDC and our clients and partners successfully fought Venoco's proposed "Paredon Oil & Gas Drilling Project" that would have meant new drilling on and off the coast of Carpinteria, as well as a 175-foot tall rig located by City Hall, the Arbol Verde neighborhood, the Carpinteria Bluffs, and the harbor seal sanctuary. In 2010, EDC helped defeat Venoco's ballot measure that attempted to circumvent the normal planning process. Venoco came back in 2014 with a revised plan for 20 new oil wells; however, the company's bankruptcy last fall has ended this threat once and for all as the area proposed for offshore drilling is now part of the California Coastal Sanctuary.



Photo: Ken Owens, Channel Islands Restoration

### SEA OTTERS: FREE AT LAST

In 1987, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) banned the threatened southern sea otter from its native habitat off our coast. In 2009, EDC filed a lawsuit on behalf of The Otter Project seeking rescission of that action. Nine years and three lawsuits later, EDC and our clients celebrated when the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a 2012 decision by the FWS to end this failed "no-otter zone." The program had been established in an effort to help the sea otter population recover. Unfortunately, it proved deadly to otters. We are pleased the Court denied the challenge brought by some commercial fishing organizations and we look forward to sea otters returning throughout their historic Southern California range.



Photo: Christina McGinnis

### PRESERVING AGRICULTURE IN SB COUNTY

EDC has stood up for sustainable local agriculture since our founding. We have supported local food production, protected farm workers, schools, and communities from pesticides, and preserved countless acres of farmland from being chopped up for development. This year, EDC continued this tradition when we successfully helped prevent the 4,000-acre Rancho La Laguna, with deep canyons, oak forests, and incredible biodiversity from being subdivided for estate development. We also worked with farmers, ranchers, and the conservation community to provide the Santa Barbara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) with a series of recommendations designed to protect and enhance ag preservation policies across our region.

**GAVIOTA COAST PLAN AND SIMPLE**

Back in 2009, Santa Barbara County began to work on a comprehensive Gaviota Coast Plan to establish a framework for future conservation efforts along this incomparable coastline. And from the beginning, EDC has fought to maximize protections for open space, sustainable agriculture, threatened and endangered plants and animals, and responsible recreation. The Plan is now set to go before the California Coastal Commission and EDC looks forward to continuing our effort to ensure sufficient protections for generations to come.



Photo: Erin Feinblatt



**EDC BOARD GROWS**

EDC is thrilled to add Rocio Lozano-Knowlton to our Board of Directors. Rocio is the Executive Director of the Ventura County based nonprofit MERITO Foundation which provides programs that build ocean and environmental stewardship, help increase understanding of ocean-related threats, and motivate culturally diverse students to pursue careers in ocean science or resource protection. Rocio founded the organization after almost a decade with the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary where she drew upon her experience as an Oceanographer, doing work for various marine conservation organizations, and as a business owner in Mexico. EDC is excited to add Rocio's voice to our organizational leadership.

**NO TRUCKING WAY**

Several Santa Barbara Channel oil platforms, including three owned by ExxonMobil, have been shut down since the 2015 Refugio Oil Spill, as the failed Plains All American Pipeline was the only option for getting this oil to refineries and then to market. Immediately after the spill, Exxon filed for an emergency permit to truck the oil, but the County of Santa Barbara wisely denied this application, protecting our coastline from increased truck traffic, air pollution, and potential spills that would harm our environment and community health. Now, Exxon is back and has applied for a regular permit for up to 70 roundtrip truck trips per day, each carrying 6,720 gallons of oil, for a total of 470,000 gallons of oil traveling along our coast daily. Unfortunately, the risks are no less serious than the last time Exxon applied, and this project must be denied.



Plains All American Pipeline 901  
Photo: Bruce Reitherman via PRA Request

**COMING TO A SCREEN NEAR YOU**

Longtime EDC Board member Gail Osherenko's award-winning documentary, *Broke: The Santa Barbara Oil Pipeline Spill of 2015*, highlights the impacts from the devastating Refugio Oil Spill, when the Plains All American Pipeline spilled more than 140,000 gallons of heavy crude onto the Gaviota Coast and into the Santa Barbara Channel. EDC's Executive Director, Owen Bailey, and Chief Counsel, Linda Krop, are featured in the film, discussing EDC's response to the spill and our continued work ensuring proper response and safety for the next time a spill happens. We look forward to bringing this film into people's homes starting this fall. If you are interested in hosting a screening, please contact Chloe at [cmccconnell@EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org](mailto:cmccconnell@EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org).



**WORK, WORK, WORK, WORK, CLERK**

We are excited to have Annie Brethour, a third-year student at the University of New Mexico, join our team as our summer law clerk. Annie has completed externships with the New Mexico Environment Department as well as WildEarth Guardians, and before starting law school, she lived in Monterey and the San Francisco Bay area working in marine mammal rehabilitation with seals, sea lions, and sea otters. Annie has jumped right in here at EDC, providing legal research on three newly proposed onshore oil projects in North County Santa Barbara that could bring 750 new cyclic steam injection wells.



**TGIF SEASON: HERE AT LAST!**

We kicked off another TGIF season on May 11, filling our downtown courtyard with a couple hundred friends enjoying local beer and wine, appetizers, and live music. Known as one of the best happy hours in Santa Barbara, guests had the opportunity to visit with our event sponsors, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter, Urban Creeks Council, and Wildlife Care Network, as well as our season underwriters, Accountability Plus, Energy Independence Now, Sunrun, and Zoom. If you missed out, don't worry! Mark your calendar and be sure to join us for the rest of the season!

**July 13 – September 14 – October 12**





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#### **EDC STAFF**

Owen Bailey, Executive Director  
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Savannah Madrid, Intern  
Jacob Prida, Intern  
Kim Qvale, Intern  
Bri Winkler, Intern

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Environmental Defense Center protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action.

#### **FOCUS**

Since 1977, we have empowered community-based organizations to advance environmental protection. Our program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health. We primarily work within Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties.



## **PARTY FOR OUR FUTURE!**

This spring, EDC held our second annual Legacy Society appreciation event and welcomed five new members to this incredible and generous group. The Legacy Society is made up of individuals and families who have included EDC in their estate planning, thus ensuring that our organization will stay strong for many years to come, protecting our climate and local environment. Any size commitment will make a huge difference for your legacy and our future! For more information on the Legacy Society, please visit [EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org/plannedgiving](https://EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org/plannedgiving) or contact Owen at [obailey@EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org](mailto:obailey@EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org).