



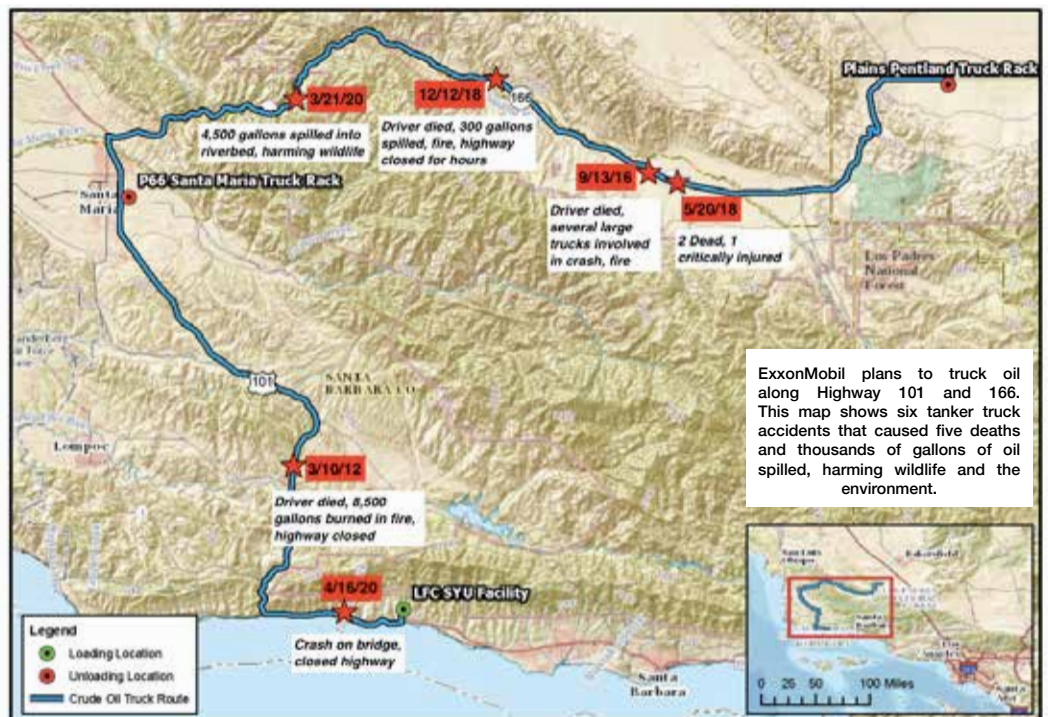
## FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER

### X OFF EXXON

At least eight platforms in the Santa Barbara Channel are in the process of being permanently shut down. Credit is due to a number of factors, including oil reservoir depletion, drops in global oil prices, financial pressures, and successful environmental advocacy. But no matter the cause, it is worth taking a moment to celebrate a win for our climate, our marine environment, and the health and safety of our communities.

Of course, not *all* the Channel's platforms are slated for decommissioning. Three platforms visible off the Gaviota Coast and operated by ExxonMobil have been shut down since the Plains All American Pipeline oil spill in May 2015. Now, ExxonMobil is pressing to restart operations and without a replacement pipeline in place, the company wants Santa Barbara County to allow up to 70 roundtrip tanker truck transits every day on the highway along the Gaviota Coast, for up to seven years.

Experts concur that trucking is among the riskiest ways to move oil. With this proposal, more than 470,000 gallons of oil could be trucked along this irreplaceable coastline each and every day. EDC and our clients, SBCAN and Get Oil Out!, believe this project must be denied due to the considerable risks of additional oil spills, air pollution, and increased accidents. EDC has been working to provide legal, technical, and environmental analysis of ExxonMobil's proposal to ensure decision makers have the information needed to deny this dangerous proposal. An additional wrinkle was added to ExxonMobil's plans in August, when Phillips 66 announced the shutdown of its Nipomo refinery and a company-wide transition to renewable fuels. How this impacts ExxonMobil's plans is unclear at this time, but EDC is monitoring this closely.



Source: ExxonMobil, Analysis-Appendix B, December 2017  
Figure ES-2 Proposed Truck Routes to Receiving Facilities

This fall's terrible and record-breaking fires in California and throughout the West have provided yet more evidence that we must stop pumping carbon into our atmosphere. Our climate is in crisis and it is our responsibility to fight this dangerous oil project. Follow EDC's social media and email this fall and we will keep you informed of opportunities to get involved. With your help, we will stop ExxonMobil's dangerous plan, protect the Gaviota Coast and our clean air, and make a difference for our climate.

# 2021 – A YEAR OF TRANSITIONS

2021 will be an important year of transition. Our region is poised to make critical decisions on both oil development projects and on renewable energy, and EDC and our clients are front and center in these processes. With the recent news of the 2023 shuttering of the Phillips 66 oil refinery in Nipomo and the conversion of its Bay Area refinery to renewable fuel stock, multiple proposed and existing oil projects will be hard pressed to proceed as projected. Several of the projects that EDC has been fighting are in this mix, including the ExxonMobil push to restart offshore drilling and the dangerous cyclic steam drilling proposal in Cat Canyon. Defeating both of these proposals would create the potential for a once in a generation opportunity to make different choices about regional energy production.

Additionally, the appeal that was filed by the federal government after our 2018 legal victory bringing a moratorium on fracking and acidizing in the Santa Barbara Channel will likely be resolved in 2021. Not only would preventing these dangerous practices leave our communities and the marine environment safer than before, but as many offshore reservoirs are significantly depleted, this could bring about another wave of decommissioning of oil platforms.

At the same time, EDC is engaged in having discussions with agencies, industry, and nonprofits about how to best bring offshore renewables to the Central Coast with as few ecological risks as possible. Amidst a growing community understanding of the pressing nature of the climate crisis, and a broad effort to bring more voices into the conversation about producing energy that aligns with our values, 2021 has the potential to begin moving the needle in the direction of climate protection.

EDC was founded as a response to the 1969 blowout on Platform A, which was at the time the largest oil spill in U.S. waters, spewing four million gallons of oil and killing over 10,000 seabirds, dolphins, seals, and sea lions. With this disaster leading to our founding, there should be

little surprise that EDC is clear on the urgency to transition to clean energy alternatives. With our decades of work analyzing complex legal and policy issues, impacts of various technologies to the marine environment, and our deep community reach, EDC is the logical nonprofit organization to help drive the conversation about the kinds of offshore renewable projects our community could support. EDC is actively involved in a planning process convened by the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) and the California Energy Commission (CEC) to consider offshore wind resources along the coast of California.

Due to our regional leadership role and experience with marine spatial planning, early in the process the CEC looked to EDC to reach out to fellow nonprofits and other stakeholders. EDC has now joined several national nonprofits and industry representatives in creating the Pacific Offshore Wind Energy Research (POWER) Working Group with a mission to advance coordinated scientific research to 1) better understand how floating offshore wind turbines and infrastructure may affect and interact with wildlife and habitats, and 2) how to avoid, minimize, and mitigate those potential impacts. EDC is considered an important member of this multi-year effort, as a respected conservation group known for our collaborative experience and strength in project management.

As we approach 2021, EDC is focused on a transition to clean energy. As counterpoint to our efforts to prevent risky new oil development and the perpetuation of the fossil fuel industry in our area, EDC is a leader in the movement to transition to clean, renewable energy. It is urgent that we take aggressive action now, moving away from the dirty fuels of the past and toward safe and renewable sources of energy that better represent our Central Coast values. Your support and participation will help make this transition possible. Please follow EDC's email and social media in the coming months to learn how you can help make a difference.





Photo: Mark Oliver

### THE BEAUTY OF SOLVANG IS UP TO THE PEOPLE

Solvang is a very special place surrounded by rich agricultural land, rolling hills with mature oak forests, and prime wine country. On behalf of Save Our Solvang, EDC drafted a ballot initiative defining an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) for Solvang to help preserve the rural character around the City. Due to the community's overwhelming support for the UGB, our clients collected more than enough signatures to qualify the initiative for the ballot. Presented with several options, the City Council voted this summer to adopt the ordinance. The UGB will protect surrounding agricultural and open space lands, prevent sprawl, and promote infill development by giving Solvang residents the opportunity to vote before urban development is allowed outside the UGB limits.

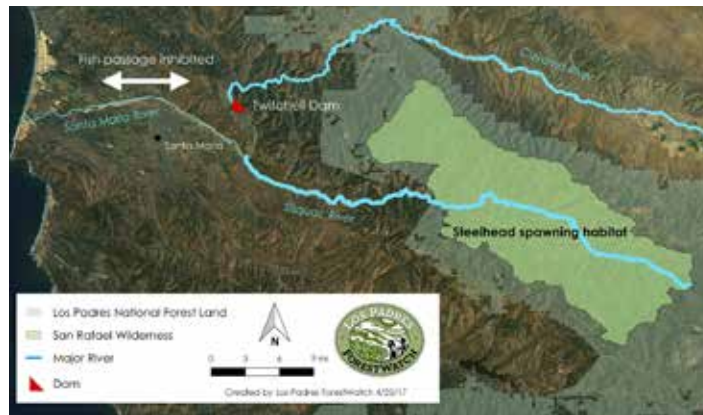


### WE DIDN'T GET ZOOM-BOMBED, THOSE ARE OUR LAW CLERKS!

This year, our staff meetings have been a little bit bigger with the addition of three law clerks. Alexa Penalosa is working toward her J.D. at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, and spent her summer

assisting our legal staff on efforts to ensure strong environmental, safety, and health regulations of open ocean aquaculture, in addition to enhanced protection for steelhead in the Santa Ynez River. Katherine Klein also joined us for the summer from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, helping EDC protect drinking water from the threats of onshore oil production and to preserve the agricultural integrity of the 4,000-acre Rancho La Laguna. And currently, we have Lena Freij joining us from the University of California, Los Angeles Law School, assisting with litigation efforts on issues regarding clean water. Unfortunately, Covid-19 has prevented us from meeting any of them in person, but it has been a delight to have a few extra faces on Zoom each week.

### ENSURING ADEQUATE WATER FOR STEELHEAD



Southern California steelhead are one of the most endangered fish in the United States and EDC has worked for many years to help restore the species. On behalf of Los Padres ForestWatch, EDC along with SLO Coastkeeper filed a lawsuit under the Endangered Species Act seeking adjusted water releases from Twitchell Dam on the Cuyama River, a tributary to the Santa Maria River. Since its construction, this Dam has prevented steelhead from migrating, a behavior crucial to the species' life cycle. Our goal is to change the timing and amount of flows to better mimic historic conditions in the watershed.

This year we successfully defeated the Dam operators' efforts to have our case dismissed. The federal court rejected all of their arguments, getting us one step closer to the recovery of a species that used to number in the tens of thousands across our region and has in recent years dwindled to the single digits.

### GOODBYE AERA—TWO OIL PROJECTS DOWN, ONE TO GO

Early this summer, EDC, our clients, and partner groups celebrated the end of another dirty oil project proposed by Aera Energy, LLC ("Aera") in the Cat Canyon Oil Field near Santa Maria. This victory prevents hundreds of oil tanker trucks from flooding our local roadways, the removal of thousands of native oak trees, peril for threatened wildlife, and threats to our water from risky steam injection operations. Aera is one of three projects that EDC has been working to halt in Cat Canyon that collectively would have more than tripled onshore oil production in Santa Barbara County. While we celebrate the withdrawal of applications from both Aera and PetroRock, we will continue to fight Terracore's plan to add hundreds of new wells, threatening our community health and the environment.



Photo: Sunrise Movement

### PROTECTING COMMUNITIES FROM OIL DEVELOPMENT

Since our beginning, EDC has worked to help protect communities from oil and gas development. And we're not about to let up. The California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) is in the process of considering new rules to protect public health and safety from oil and gas operations. EDC has been pushing, among other things, to ensure significant setbacks from homes and schools, and to ensure that these dangerous operations are not placed in fire-prone regions. EDC began this Environmental Justice work as part of our opposition to new oil drilling projects proposed in Cat Canyon, but there are implications for at-risk families throughout the tri-county area and beyond.



Photo: Rebecca August

### PROTECTING DRINKING WATER FROM OIL & GAS

This year we celebrated the withdrawal of two of the three dangerous oil projects proposed for Cat Canyon. But EDC, our co-clients Sierra Club and SBCAN, and a coalition of partner organizations continue to work to stop the third project, and to protect our clean water, air, communities, and climate. To that end, we are fighting an expanded exemption from the Safe Drinking Water Act which, if approved, would allow oil companies to inject substantially more oil and chemical wastewater into underground aquifers. EDC has worked with experts, submitted comments, and continues to advocate before state agencies to protect the water our communities need for drinking and agriculture.



Photo: Rebecca August

## THE NEXT FRONTIER IN MARINE PROTECTION

EDC is advocating for the designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, stretching from Cambria south to Gaviota Creek and offshore to include Rodriguez Seamount, Arguello Canyon, and Santa Lucia Bank. Once established, this underwater park would receive special protection for endangered species, sensitive habitats, and submerged sites sacred to the Chumash Peoples. Establishing a marine sanctuary at this location would also eliminate the threat of more oil development. The current nomination was set to expire this October, but with strong support from EDC and our partners, the nomination was extended to 2025.



Photo: Jaimi Kercher



We'll be honest: we really missed gathering with you all in-person at the Stow House for our annual fundraising event. But it was still a delight to be "together" virtually for Green & Blue: The Living Room Edition on July 9th. And what a huge success it was, thanks to all of you who attended, who donated, and to our generous event sponsors.

Who knew that the chat room of a virtual event could bring so much energy and fun? Thank you for joining us and helping ensure EDC can continue our critical work protecting this special stretch of the coast.



## PROTECT OUR CLIMATE & SUPPORT EDC

Right now, EDC and Brighten Solar are offering you the chance to protect our climate while supporting EDC. If you are looking to add solar panels or a battery storage system and go through Brighten, they will make a contribution of \$500 to EDC. For more information or to schedule a time to meet, email [hello@brightensolarco.com](mailto:hello@brightensolarco.com) or call (805) 708-3654 and be sure to mention EDC so that your installation will help support our work while making a difference for our climate.



Photo: Erin Feinblatt

## GOING, GOING...? THE STATUS OF OIL PLATFORMS IN THE CHANNEL

The Santa Barbara Channel is home to 20 oil and gas platforms, and federal and state laws require them to be decommissioned once they reach the end of their productive life. Platform Holly, which sits just off the coast of UCSB and is the only one located in state waters, is the furthest along in the decommissioning process. However, it is estimated that all 27 platforms off California will need to be decommissioned by 2055. Decisions will need to be made on which decommissioning options are best for the marine environment, and this will require environmental and scientific review for each platform. With the help of our Marine Conservation Intern, Nicole Schmidt, EDC is developing an interactive website that will tour us through the specific details and status of each platform in the Channel. Watch your email to learn when you can start your tour through the Channel.

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#### **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.



## **PLEASE, TELL US WHAT YOU THINK**

Hopefully you received a short survey from EDC in the mail or in your inbox. If you haven't yet filled it out, there is still time to tell us what you think. This is an easy way for you to help us learn more about our community so we can be more effective in our communications and better understand how you would like to engage with EDC.

Please take a few moments to share your thoughts by visiting <http://bit.ly/edcsurvey2020>.

The survey will be open until the end of November.