



SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

OFFSHORE WIND PROPOSED ALONG THE CENTRAL COAST

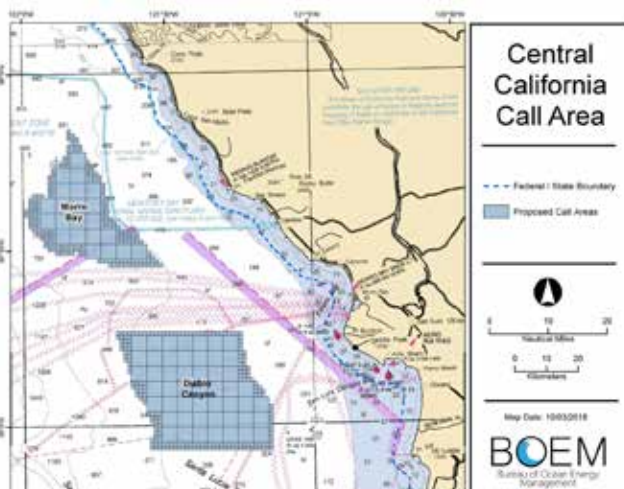
From its founding, the Environmental Defense Center has been a stalwart leader in statewide efforts to rid our coastline of offshore oil. We have championed laws, policies, and grassroots efforts to ensure that the Santa Barbara Channel and beyond is protected from the devastating impacts of oil spills. We do this work to protect a livable climate and to stand for the health of our communities. To complement this effort, EDC has also worked to support renewable energy to help our communities transition from fossil fuels to clean energy, such as the Lompoc Wind and Cuyama Solar projects. We see this as a vital part of our fight for the protection of threatened plants and animals on and off our shores, and to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy this beautiful place we treasure.



Photo: BOEM

We must both stop fossil fuel extraction along our coast to protect the marine environment and respond to our current climate crisis, as well as support a just transition to renewable energy. So, for the past five years, EDC has led our region's efforts to develop responsible offshore renewable energy.

The time for developing wind power off our coast has come. To make a difference for our climate and people living on the Central Coast, we must move floating offshore wind projects forward. But, as we do so, we need to protect migrating blue whales, brown pelicans, Pacific leatherback sea turtles, and other marine life. EDC has been a leading nonprofit voice in creating a wildlife working group focused on understanding how offshore renewable energy projects may interact with and affect marine life and habitat, and how to avoid or mitigate those potential impacts. Any project developed should be sited in federal waters (preferably 20 or more miles offshore). EDC is working closely with state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and the wind industry itself to advance progress. Wind power projects developed off the Central Coast will require new technology for floating turbines, and we need all these voices around the table to move projects forward responsibly. EDC's priority is to ensure project proposals are considered using the best available science, are sited in locations with the least impacts on the marine environment and conflict to other ocean users, and that energy is produced in a way that does least harm to impacted species and habitat.

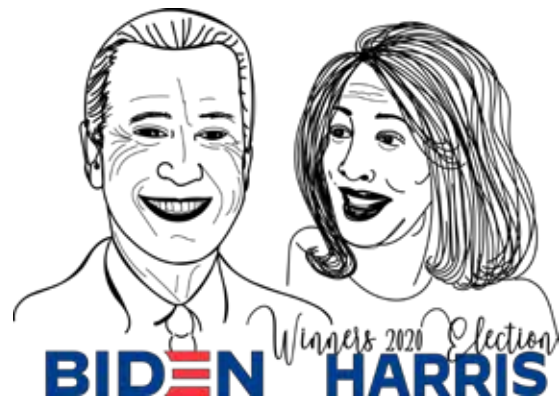


Late spring, we will host a lunchtime webinar to provide opportunities for the community to learn more about EDC's work, proposed projects, and what comes next as we work to bring wind power to the Central Coast. We are eager to share some details regarding this proactive, forward-looking work that EDC is helping drive.

THE NEW ADMINISTRATION: WHAT IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED & WHAT'S AHEAD

Elections have consequences. In 2016, that was a hard lesson for those concerned with environmental protection and climate action. We had to watch while the Trump Administration went after virtually every plank in Obama's climate agenda. Through executive actions, new regulations, and the courts, President Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord, rolled back offshore oil drilling rules, eased the way for fossil fuel pipelines, attempted to open the nation's entire coastline to new oil and gas drilling, put industry lobbyists and executives in charge of environmental protection, weakened the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), downsized national monuments, opened public lands to mining and drilling, attempted to roll back stricter tailpipe emissions standards and federal rules on coal plants, censored climate change information, and even attempted to alter the way science can be used to develop rules. The list goes on and on. And of course, environmental protection was not alone in facing Administration attacks: immigration, healthcare, equal rights, the rule of law, organized labor, and functioning governance were among the many other important areas targeted by President Trump and his allies.

In 2020, the pendulum finally swung back. The Biden/Harris Administration took office with an immediate and urgent backlog of issues to address. So far, the President has established a new direction through executive orders and his appointments. The list is long, but below you will find some of the priority environmental and climate actions that have been and can be undertaken by the Biden/Harris Administration.



DAY ONE ACTIONS

On day one, the new Administration rejoined the Paris Climate Accord, revoked the permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline, and circulated a list of federal agency actions that required review. On the Paris Accord, not only did the U.S. rejoin more than 100 days after we abandoned our commitments, but the President has pledged to help improve this agreement in order to meet the evolving threats of climate change. There is a symbolic nature to the actions a new president chooses to highlight on the first day in office; these moves indicate a historic level of commitment to climate change and environmental justice.

CABINET SELECTIONS

So much of the Biden climate and environment agenda will be moved forward by his cabinet secretaries and high-level appointments. This group stands out as experienced and committed on these critical issues and includes Michael Regan at the EPA, Deb Haaland at the Department of the Interior, Jennifer Granholm as Energy Secretary, and John Kerry as a special presidential envoy on climate change. Among this list, Deb Haaland stands out as both a historic pick as the first Native American to head this important department and as a known progressive and outspoken supporter of the Green New Deal.



Image: Bunky Echo Hawk



OIL LEASING

Immediately, the new Administration put a pause on the issuance of any permits or leases for oil and gas drilling on public lands. Our hope is that we will soon see the withdrawal of fracking activities from public lands, including the Carrizo National Monument in San Luis Obispo County. Offshore, Biden's win meant a permanent end to Trump's offshore oil leasing plan. We anticipate news on Biden's new 5-year Oil and Gas Leasing Plan soon, and EDC will be very active in helping ensure protections for our coast. We have reason for optimism, as Vice President Harris has a strong track record in these areas, supporting the Green New Deal and opposing offshore oil drilling and fracking on public lands. Additionally, in her time as CA's Attorney General, she filed criminal charges against Plains All American Pipeline for its 2015 oil spill that devastated our coast, environment, and economy.

REINSTATING OBAMA POLICIES

In the coming months we look to see the Administration direct federal agencies to bring back important policies from the Obama Administration including more aggressive fuel efficiency standards, the Methane Rule and the Clean Power Plan, and the funding of clean energy programs. All this must be reinstated in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We also expect to see the EPA resume efforts to improve air quality, the safety of our drinking water, and to restore protections for wetlands and streams.



NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Another action we hope to see is an openness to consider new National Marine Sanctuaries. The previous Administration had frozen any such requests for these important protected marine environments. EDC and our partners have been long advocating for the establishment of a new Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. This Sanctuary would extend from Gaviota to the southern border of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, protecting cultural resources, migrating whales and other wildlife, and prohibiting offshore oil drilling.



OFFSHORE FRACKING AND ACIDIZING

We seek a reversal in the federal government's approval of offshore fracking permits. EDC is awaiting a date for oral arguments before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. On behalf of Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and EDC, we are urging the new Administration to reverse the existing position of the federal government and agree that fracking poses unacceptable risks to the marine environment. Rather than focus on promoting offshore oil development, the federal government should ramp up its focus on renewable energy, such as responsibly sited offshore wind. This fits with the Administration's goals to double wind power production by 2030.



Photo: Erin Feinblatt



Photo: Mark Oliver

CAT (CANYON) IS OUT OF THE BAG

As the days wound down toward the end of 2020, EDC, our clients, and partners celebrated the withdrawal of Terracore's dangerous oil project in Cat Canyon. This was the final domino to fall, the last of three risky projects which would have injected acids underground and used extreme oil extraction techniques like cyclic steam injection and steam flooding. This defeat is especially remarkable when only a few months before, these projects posed the largest environmental justice threat in Santa Barbara County in decades. Drinking water and clean air were at risk, along with a tripling of onshore oil production, many hundreds of daily oil tanker truck transits, the loss of over 1,500 oak trees, and 1.5 million metric tons of additional CO2 emissions each year.

The immediate threats from these three projects may be past, but EDC is continuing our work to ensure they do not return and to prevent other similar projects. On behalf of Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter, SBCAN, and EDC, we continue to fight against the oil companies' requested aquifer exemption which would allow them to inject their chemically-polluted wastewater underground, threatening groundwater quality and an important source of local drinking water. We are also working closely with Senators Monique Limón and Scott Weiner on SB 467, legislation which would ban the oil and gas extraction techniques of fracking, acidizing, cyclic steam injection, and steam flooding in the state of California as well as drilling near neighborhoods.

A PLAN TO PROTECT GOLETA'S CREEKS

This February, the Goleta City Council moved one step closer to implementing its far-reaching vision for protecting and restoring Goleta's beautiful but beleaguered streams by placing implementation of the Creek and Watershed Management Plan into the City's Strategic Plan. The idea for the Plan really took off as a result of EDC's annual creek cleanups. EDC went on to serve on the Technical Advisory Committee, along with several other nonprofits and experts helping City staff develop the Plan. The Plan identifies ways to protect Goleta's watersheds by creating a new City Program, protecting key areas of Goleta's watersheds, cleaning up stormwater, and restoring the riparian habitats which line Goleta's scenic creeks. Once implemented, the Plan will help ensure that our children, grandchildren, and future generations will enjoy healthy creeks with clean water, fish and wildlife species, and quiet places to contemplate and learn about nature.



Photo: Brian Trautwein



NEW ADDITIONS TO EDC LEGAL TEAM

We are most excited to have three additions to our strong legal team: Rachel Kondor, Staff Attorney; Peter Jones, Legal Fellow; and Lauren Lankenau, Law Clerk. Rachel worked for environmental advocacy organizations in Arizona before spending more than a decade working as senior legislative assistant on environmental and tribal matters to Congressman Raúl Grijalva, and then as a local representative of Congresswoman Lois Capps. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Arizona and her J.D. from Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland with a Certificate in Environmental and Natural Resources Law. Peter recently received his degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, during which he spent his summers clerking at the headquarters of the Environmental Protection Agency and in the Environmental Enforcement Section of the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General. Lauren is a second-year student at Vanderbilt Law School where she serves as the President of the Energy and Environmental Law Society. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara, with honors in environmental studies and geography, and also interned for EDC. It is an honor to have these great minds serving our clients and community in our work to protect this special place.

STORMWATER RUNOFF FROM OIL FACILITIES

An aerial view of portions of Santa Barbara and Ventura County shows thousands of oil and gas wells and associated facilities connected by a spider web of dirt roads. By law, the Clean Water Act requires oil companies to have a permit if the oil field may discharge pollutants via stormwater runoff into protected waters. Toxic metals, soil, and sediment often run off these facilities into our local rivers and eventually to the Pacific Ocean, threatening wildlife and the water our communities rely on for agriculture and recreation. Permits are important because they set limitations on polluted discharges and require regular sampling, monitoring, and reporting. Unfortunately, on behalf of Los Padres ForestWatch, EDC has discovered that some operators in Ventura County do not have permits, and thus there is no available information on the companies' potential discharges. EDC will continue our work to reduce polluted stormwater from oil facilities by ensuring all oil and gas facilities obtain necessary permits or are able to prove they do not cause any polluted discharge to protected waters.



Photo: Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

GREEN & BLUE, ALL WE NEED IS YOU

Green & Blue is one of the Central Coast's most exciting annual events and though it will be virtual this year, it will still be full of fun and surprises! Our goal is to once again raise 15% of our operating budget to support EDC's work protecting our local environment.

Please join us on May 13th at 6pm for an evening you won't want to miss. Newly elected Ventura County Supervisor Carmen Ramirez will be honored as our Environmental Hero for her years of work and leadership in fighting for our environment, healthy communities, and environmental justice. We will also have a couple special guests: Nicola Bailey, who will perform her poem "A Grave Matter," and Leah Stokes, an energy policy expert and professor at UCSB. Sponsors can anticipate delivery of yummy vegan or vegetarian bites and refreshing beverages from local businesses such as Duo Catering, The Ojai Vineyard, and Rincon Brewery. And you don't want to miss our always exciting live and silent auctions featuring some amazing items from our local community.



EXXON...AND ON AND ON

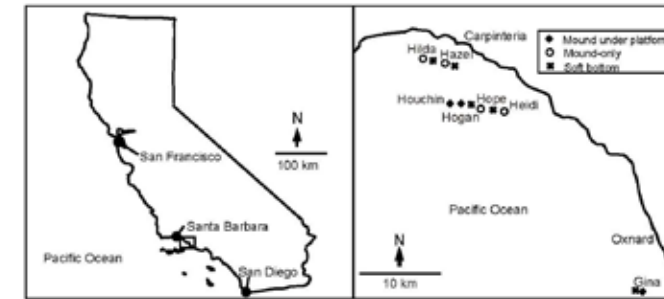
On May 19, 2015, the Plains All American Pipeline ruptured near Refugio Beach, causing tremendous environmental damage to our coast and marine environment. The spill shut down seven offshore oil platforms, four of which are now slated to be decommissioned. ExxonMobil, however, is trying to restart drilling in the Santa Barbara Channel, looking to truck oil to the Phillips refinery in Nipomo until the end of 2022 when that facility will close permanently, and then to Kern County via the dangerous Highway 166. Meanwhile, Plains All American is trying to rebuild its local pipeline network. Both these efforts are moving forward now, with release of the Plains Environmental Impact Report expected this summer and ExxonMobil anticipating a hearing before the Santa Barbara County Planning Commission around the same time. EDC represents Get Oil Out!, SBCAN, and EDC in efforts to prevent ExxonMobil from resuming oil production in the Santa Barbara Channel.



Photo: Bruce Reitherman via Public Record Act Request

PRESSURE MOUNTS AGAINST CHEVRON MOUNDS

Figure 2. Map showing the study region and the locations of the oil platform, shell mound-only, and soft bottom study sites in the Santa Barbara Channel.



In 1996, Chevron decommissioned four oil platforms off the coast of Summerland. Local residents cheered as platforms Hazel, Hilda, Hope, and Heidi, also known as the 4-H platforms, were removed. Unfortunately, the oil company didn't finish the job. Left behind were toxic refuse and shell mounds which threaten to pollute our marine environment and impede both fishing and navigation. On behalf of GOO!, Carpinteria Planning Association, and Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter, EDC is urging the California State Lands Commission to take action and require Chevron to finally meet its legal and moral requirements to remove these contaminated mounds and restore the seafloor.



SOLAR IS THE WAY

EDC is honored to partner with our friends at Brighten Solar to help our Central Coast Communities increase residential solar power. Over the past years, it has become even more clear that the signs of climate change cannot be ignored. California has experienced historic droughts, an increased fire season, and tragic debris flows. It is critical we do everything we can to reduce carbon emissions, and installing solar power and/or battery storage on our homes is one way to make a difference. Right now, Brighten Solar is offering EDC a \$500 contribution for any solar or battery system installed through the company. For more information, email hello@brightensolarco.com or call (805) 708-3654 and be sure to mention EDC.

WATER QUALITY IN THE SANTA YNEZ RIVER

The City of Lompoc's Regional Wastewater Reclamation plant is located near San Miguelito Creek, a tributary to the Santa Ynez River that ultimately flows into the ocean at Ocean Beach Park, the community's only beach access in the area. This Plant handles the City's wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal, and unfortunately has been discharging water contaminated with toxic pollutants for years into the Creek and River, threatening public recreation and wildlife such as the endangered Southern California steelhead and the threatened Western snowy plover. Based on the City's own reporting, EDC discovered its violations of the Clean Water Act and filed a 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue in hopes that the City would make adjustments to its facility and come into compliance with its permit. After time passed, EDC filed a lawsuit and is now working with the City in good faith to resolve these violations and restore water quality in the Creek and River, and to protect the ecologically sensitive habitat areas downstream for wildlife and the public to enjoy.



FISH BREEDING IN THE OPEN OCEAN

As the United States continues to experience a growing demand for seafood, the push to increase open ocean aquaculture escalates. Aquaculture is the breeding and rearing of shellfish and finfish in the ocean using lines, nets, and cages. While it can provide an additional domestic food source, it comes with impacts to the marine environment, as well as public health and safety, that must be closely considered. In late 2020, EDC began advocacy efforts to ensure an aquaculture project proposed offshore Ventura would be held to the highest environmental standards. On behalf of Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, EDC successfully convinced the Ventura Port District to withdraw its application to secure access to 2,000 acres of federal waters, where regulations have proven ineffective at protecting the marine environment and public safety. While this project will be withdrawn in August 2021, EDC will continue to work at the federal and state level to ensure aquaculture sites are properly sited and strong legislation is put in place to minimize impacts to marine life and public health and safety.



Photo: NOAA

OUR COMMITMENT



This past year has truly highlighted the critical work that needs to be done across the nation to create a more just and equitable world, and here at EDC we are taking it very seriously. Our staff and board members have attended trainings and formed a Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI) Committee that has been meeting biweekly since last summer to examine our organization's structure and determine internal actions. We also hired Equity Praxis Group to help us better understand the changes we need to make to better serve and support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our community. We will continue to dedicate full board and staff working sessions to these important issues and to ensure we make lasting change to EDC. We know this is just the beginning, but we are committed to being a more diverse and inclusive organization, and will continue to put in the work to ensure the voices of all of our community members are heard and represented through our work.



environmental
DEFENSE CENTER

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Jack Greenberg, Intern
 Lauren Lankenau, Law Clerk
 Lauren Skube, 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.

**JOIN EDC'S
LEGACY SOCIETY**



Everyone who knows me understands that the environment is very close to my heart. I scuba dive, I bike, I walk as often as I can to avoid using fossil fuels, and I treasure clean water, fresh air, and abundant open space.

In my professional life, I assist people with their estate planning. I am all too aware of how important bequests and other “planned gifts” can be for a nonprofit’s long-term sustainability. That is why I am proud to include EDC in my own will. That way, when I pass on and no longer need my money, I know that it will continue to support the good work EDC does to protect the environment I have long depended on.

—Lori Lewis

If you would like more information about EDC’s Legacy Society, please call Owen Bailey at 805-963-1622 or visit www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org.