



# News Release

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## **Oil Company Walks Away from Negotiations on South LA Oil Field**

*Community Calls on County to make good on commitment to reexamine regulations now that PXP Oil pulls out of settlement talks*

**LOS ANGELES, CA** — Last week, Plains Exploration & Production (PXP), the Texas oil company seeking to drill hundreds of new oil wells in a Los Angeles neighborhood, walked away from negotiations in a lawsuit challenging zoning regulations established in October 2008 for the Baldwin Hills Oil Field. Attorneys with Community Health Councils and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) learned that PXP would not be open to a settlement that will affect hundreds of thousands of Baldwin Hills residents, despite extensive efforts to settle the litigation.

The Baldwin Hills Oil Field operates in one of the most-densely populated areas of the country: nearly 300,000 residents live within three miles of the oil field. In June 2008, a temporary moratorium on drilling in Baldwin Hills expired and the community sought permanent zoning regulations and stronger protections from increased drilling activities. “When the resulting Community Standards District (CSD) failed to meet their expectations,” says Lark Galloway-Gilliam of Community Health Councils, “residents worked tirelessly to reopen the review and filed four lawsuits against County.”

In August 2009, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a request from Supervisor Ridley-Thomas to direct the Department of Regional Planning to initiate a study to modify the existing environmental regulations that govern oil operations in the field. But in the 16 months since the Supervisor’s motion was approved, no study has been issued, the required

public hearings have not been held, no amendments have been proposed, and drilling has resumed. When questioned about the status of the Supervisor's efforts to strengthen the CSD, the Office of County Counsel replied in late November 2010 that "efforts to settle the litigation have been the primary focus, rather than amending the CSD."

In a letter to the county counsel dated December 6, 2010, attorneys for Community Health Councils and the NRDC called upon the County and Supervisors to move forward with the study and community hearings in light of the current set-back in negotiations.

The County has allowed PXP to not only resume drilling in the oil field as of June 2010, but expand their operation despite the company's disregard for key provisions in the current ordinance. Among other things, the monitoring for noise and vibration impacts required under the CSD have not occurred nor have the air monitoring sensors promised to residents been supplied nor a new flare to burn off excess gas been installed. The County has consistently maintained that it can amend the CSD at any time regardless of whether it is mandated by the court. CHC, NRDC and Baldwin Hills residents call on the County to take those steps to hold PXP accountable and protect the community from harmful drilling happening in the backyards of Baldwin Hills residents.

"Baldwin Hills residents have every right to be concerned about their health and were working in good faith with PXP to allow oil drilling to continue while putting in place some precautionary measures to protect the local community," says Damon Nagami from NRDC. "PXP pulling out from the settlement talks is a setback for public health that the County now needs to step up and fix."

*Community Health Councils is a non-profit, community-based health promotion, advocacy and policy organization. Established in 1992, CHC's mission is to improve health and increase access to quality healthcare for uninsured, economically-disadvantaged, and underserved populations.*