



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Residents Gather to Mark 5th Anniversary of Noxious Emissions & Demand Stronger Regulations on Baldwin Hills Oil Fields

Residents urged to attend Community Meeting on January 27th at 7pm at the Kenneth Hahn State Park Community Room • 4100 South La Cienega Blvd • LA 90056

LOS ANGELES, CA — On this month's fifth anniversary of the release of noxious fumes from the Baldwin Hills Oil Field that led dozens of area residents to evacuate their homes, more than 50 community members gathered in a soccer field overlooking the oil fields to ask the County Board of Supervisors to strengthen environmental regulations. Stronger regulations are needed to protect the health and safety of the more than 300,000 residents who live within three miles of the field. In August 2009, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion to initiate a study to modify existing regulations, but in the 17 months since the motion was approved, no study has been issued, the required public hearings have not been held, and new drilling has resumed.

“Residents have been subject to air and noise pollution from the drilling for many years, but January 2006 marked a turning point,” says John Kuechle, a Culver City resident. “A gas release in the middle of the night forced a number of us to evacuate our homes and had dozens of residents calling emergency services and the Air Quality Management District. Five years later we still have concerns that County regulations are not providing all the protections residents deserve.”

Five months after the 2006 incident, the County adopted a moratorium that prohibited new drilling until 2008 and provided time for the development of an ordinance to more effectively regulate drilling in the Baldwin Hills oil field. The oil field operator, Plains Exploration & Production (PXP) revealed its plans to drill as many as 1,000 new wells over the next twenty years. Hundreds of residents and homeowner groups mobilized to ensure the required environmental study and proposed zoning regulations adequately addressed the hazards and health risk to the community. However, the resulting Community Standards District (CSD) failed to meet their expectations and residents have been working since then to reopen the review, filing four lawsuits against the County.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a motion in August 2009 that directed the Acting Director of the Department of Regional Planning to consider amendments to the CSD, including imposing controls regarding the abandonment of wells, establishing an end date for drilling, and revising the number of new wells allowed per year. The study never went forward and instead, the County allowed PXP to resume drilling in the oil field as of June 2010 without key environmental shortfalls being addressed. 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 or a new flare to burn off excess gas been installed.

“Community residents have every right to be concerned about their health. We want to see our elected officials follow through on their promise to make community health issues a priority,” says Baldwin Hills resident Irma Munoz.

Community members and families who live, work and play near the oil fields are urged to attend a Community Advisory Panel meeting at Kenneth Hahn State Park Community Room (4100 South La Cienega Blvd) on Thursday, January 27th at 7pm to recount their experiences with noise, odor, vibrations, health, safety and the visual impact of the oil field. Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas has promised to attend the meeting to hear directly from residents on their concerns.

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, under-resourced, and underserved populations.

The Greater Baldwin Hills Alliance is a collaborative effort of community organizations, neighborhood associations and block clubs representing more than 50,000 households.

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