

CVA Action

The Newsletter of the Carpinteria Valley Association

Volume 45, No. 1

Spring 2008

Paredon Proposal “Clarified” in Revised EIR

Article by Robert Sollen

The new impact report on Venoco’s plans for oceanfront oil drilling in Carpinteria considerably revises the one that came under fierce attack at a public hearing last July 30. Much of the material is new and much of the rest is revised.

The additions and revisions stem from about 1,500 oral and written comments submitted at and after the hearing. Marine Research Specialists, the group preparing the Environmental Impact Report, conferred with personnel from Venoco, Carpinteria Community Development Department, many public agencies, and industrial specialists to respond to the avalanche of comments.

Most of the changes and additions are attempts to assure greater safety and environmental protection during construction and operation of the massive project. Jackie Campbell, Carpinteria’s Community Development Director, characterized the changes as “clarifications.” And many of them are that.

They will be described and discussed at a meeting of the city’s Environmental Review Committee on May 19. (See article on page 2 “Paredon: Where are we and what happens next?”) Copies of the report are available at City Hall in paper and on CD, or online on the City’s website, and a copy is available for review at the Carpinteria Library. It is difficult to say how many pages it is, as each of the many sections starts over with page one. But the paper version weighs ten pounds. Response to comments and appendixes are in addition to that, and they’re available on CD at City Hall.

Venoco owns two state oil leases offshore Carpinteria at the end of Dump Road which leads to the company’s oil pier near the harbor seal refuge. It proposes to drill into the offshore leases from a 175-foot tower located *onshore*, since the state no longer permits new drilling in its waters extending three miles offshore. Although it is only one among scores of targets of protest, the drill tower appears to be at the center. The 15-story high structure would conflict with the city’s oceanfront which public agencies and private groups have firmly protected from commercial and industrial development.

Another significant part of the proposed project is Venoco’s oil and gas storage and processing plant at the end of Dump Road. Much of this aging facility would be removed if the Paredon project were approved, but it would be replaced by an array of new industrial equip-

ment. This would include production facilities, water injection system, submersible pumps, equipment to separate gas and water, other equipment to separate oil and water pumped from offshore, and redesigned compressors to induce gas production.

Oil and gas would come ashore through pipelines. The gas would be processed at the Dump Road site for commercial distribution by the Gas Company. Crude oil would be sent to Los Angeles area refineries through existing pipelines. Maps in the report show the onshore pipeline route closely following the ocean coast. “The pipeline is considered to be in excellent condition,” the report says.

A series of discovery wells would be drilled to verify the optimistic estimates of the offshore reservoirs. If profitable production appears likely, the 175-foot drilling tower would be replaced by a 140-foot drill rig for production which could reach 11,000 barrels a day, the report says. A 140-foot high rig would still be a major intrusion in that setting.

Drilling and production could go on for six years, and after that there would be re-drilling and work-over of old wells for another 10 years. There might be 21 “high-angle” (slant-drilled) wells and then maybe a half-dozen or more drilled nearly straight down into reservoirs onshore.

The report cites Venoco’s estimates of public revenue from the project. The uncertainties are emphasized by these estimates. Royalty income to Carpinteria, for instance, was foreseen as between \$15 million and \$108 million over the 16-year life of the project. And state royalty income was estimated at between \$60 million and \$240 million. The company predicts city income from production and property taxes at \$10 million over the life of the project, or an average of \$625,000 a year. Income and sales taxes are estimated at over \$42 million. Carpinterians who testified at last July’s hearing said the costs to the city should be factored in, and expressed doubt about Venoco’s revenue forecasts.

The new report does not add much to the number of “class one impacts,” which are those that cannot be reduced to less than significant levels. But it does add some measures to reduce or fend off these industrial assaults. In other cases, it does not improve on required protective measures. For instance, if oil is spilled along the coast, “oil shall be immediately contained and removed. . .” Ask Santa Barbarans or residents along Prince William Sound how easily that is done.

One impact that gets much new attention is the possible escape of hydrogen sulfide during any one of several stages of the project. It is regarded as a “class two” impact,” less than significant if mitigation measures are employed. But the report contains a new page of requirements to avoid or minimize the escape of this toxic material.

The report also gives much new attention to the impact of industrial waste runoff on surface water quality. The storm water pollution plan permit needs to be amended to identify construction and operation as a potential source of contaminants in stormwater, the report says. It goes into detail about liquid waste pollution entering into groundwater without adequate protection.

There is much more concern about earthquakes and other ground movements than appeared in the original report. There is also more attention to noise about which neighbors complained at last July’s hearing. Another concern that gets attention now is the protection of any discovered human remains at the site after members of the Chumash community raised the issue at the first hearing.

Such hearings have demonstrated strong vocal sentiment that Carpinteria is among central California’s internationally-known tourist and residential communities in large measure because its waterfront has been preserved – or restored – from industrial development. It is now up to this community to decide what its future holds. ❖

Proposed Paredon drilling tower based on a visual simulation in the EIR.

The viewpoint is from the public trail in front of the proposed project location.

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Paredon: Where are we and what happens next?

Article by Robert Sollen

The City of Carpinteria is hosting a public meeting, currently scheduled for May 19, on the revamped impact report for Venoco’s plans to drill for offshore oil from Carpinteria’s waterfront. It will start at 5:30 p.m. at Carpinteria City Hall. The meeting before the Environmental Review Committee was previously set for April 9, but the magnitude of the controversial project keeps setting the schedule back.

The May 19 meeting is not an official hearing, but a session to advise the public of changes in the ten-pound document since the public hearing July 30 last year. Public comment will also be heard. Copies of the new document, called the “Proposed Final Environmental Report, Venoco Paredon Project”, are available at City Hall. The Carpinteria library also has a copy for inspection. Additionally,

(see “What’s next?” on pg. 2)

For more information on Venoco’s Paredon Project and what you can do about it, attend a CVA-sponsored workshop:
Tuesday, May 13 at 7:00 pm
Carpinteria Women’s Club
(1059 Vallecito Road, Carpinteria.)

Impacts of Paredon

Article by Mike Wondolowski

The proposed Final EIR for Paredon identifies and details a laundry list of impacts that would result from this project. As required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the EIR categorizes negative impacts as Class I, II, or III. Beneficial impacts are categorized as Class IV, but that point does not require any further discussion here since the EIR identifies exactly zero Class IV impacts!

The magnitude of each type of negative impact is compared to a “threshold of significance” for the relevant resource or issue area. For each impact that exceeds the threshold, the EIR analyzes the effect of possible mitigations, and determines whether the impact can be reduced below the threshold.

The most serious category of impact is Class I. These are impacts that are expected to result in significant, unavoidable impacts no matter what mitigations are implemented. Class II impacts are those that would exceed the threshold, but with the identified mitigations are expected to be below the threshold. Finally, Class III impacts are those that do not exceed the defined thresholds.

It is important to note that the term “insignificant” as used in the EIR has a completely different meaning than most people would expect. In the EIR, it means “less than the threshold of significance”. This can be very, very different from “not noticeable” or “minimal”. It is also important to recognize that when the EIR classifies impacts as Class II (significant but mitigatable), this assumes that the mitigations are implemented completely and accurately.

The Paredon EIR identifies the following number of negative impacts of the proposed project:

- Class I: 11 impacts**
- Class II: 27 impacts**
- Class III: 17 impacts**



The EIR documents how ocean water quality, plant life, and animal life would be at risk from accidental oil releases.

What's next? (from page 1)

the document is available for download (as 3 very large PDF files totaling over 120 Mbytes) from the City's website:

http://www.carpinteria.ca.us/communitydev/project_info.shtml

City Planning Commission hearings will be scheduled in the summer or fall, according to current plans, and if City Council hearings are necessary they are anticipated for late 2008 or early 2009. The Planning Commission could deny the project, but if it approves, the City Council must then decide whether to make the zoning changes that would be needed to accommodate Venoco's proposed onshore structures. These are extensive, including a 175-foot drilling tower.

Eight other agencies must also review the plan before it could go forward. None of these agencies examines the entire program, but each reviews the parts that must meet the requirements of its jurisdiction. For instance, the county Air Pollution Control District would determine whether the project meets county air quality standards, before issuing its permit.

Agencies with some jurisdiction in the project are the federal Office of Pipeline Safety, State Lands Commission, State Division of Oil and Gas, California Coastal Commission, Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District, and the County Fire Department.

The report was drafted by Marine Research Specialists under contract with the city of Carpinteria.

The hearing schedule can be found on the city's website at <http://www.carpinteria.ca.us> and it will be updated as dates, times, and places are determined for each step. ❖

Paredon Class I Impacts

RISK OF UPSET and HAZARDOUS MATERIALS (EIR Section 4.1)

- R.1 The project would present impacts to public safety from proposed project activities at the Carpinteria Processing Facility (CPF).

MARINE MAMMALS (EIR Section 4.3)

- MM.7 An oil release could impact marine mammals.
MM.8 A release of gases could affect marine mammals.

MARINE RESOURCES (EIR Section 4.4)

- RM.1 Accidental oil releases could affect marine water quality and marine biological resources.

ONSHORE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES (EIR Section 4.5)

- OB.2 An accidental oil spill and subsequent clean-up efforts have the potential to substantially diminish the habitat for fish, wildlife, or plants, including rare or endangered species, interfere substantially with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, and/or result in a net loss in the functional habitat value of sensitive biological habitat, including salt, freshwater, or brackish marsh, river mouth, coastal lagoons, or estuaries.
OB.3 Any accidental oil spill and subsequent clean-up efforts have the potential to directly affect any part of the population of a threatened, endangered, or candidate species or result in the loss or disturbance to its habitat, specifically, species that inhabit Carpinteria Salt Marsh Carpinteria Creek, the Ventura River, or forage along the coast between the CPF and the Shell Ventura and Conoco Phillips (Tosco) terminal.

ONSHORE WATER RESOURCES (EIR Section 4.6)

- OWR.4 A rupture or leak from the oil drilling operation, pipelines, or other infrastructure could substantially degrade surface and groundwater quality.

LAND USE (EIR Section 4.9)

- LU.2 Views of the drilling rig would be incompatible with the adjacent land uses.

RECREATION (EIR Section 4.11)

- REC.1 The proposed project would increase the likelihood and volume of an oil spill, which could result in public access restrictions to coastal recreational resources.
REC.4 The project would adversely affect public viewsheds of the highest sensitivity through the installation of a drilling rig which would strongly contrast with the surrounding environment.

VISUAL RESOURCES AND AESTHETICS (EIR Section 4.15)

- V.1 The project would adversely affect public viewsheds of the highest sensitivity through the installation of a drilling rig which would strongly contrast with the surrounding environment. ❖



The threats Paredon creates to marine mammals, such as these harbor seals, cannot be mitigated to less than “significant” levels no matter what measures are taken.

Carpinteria Valley Association

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The *Carpinteria Valley Association* (CVA) was founded in 1964, and continues its mission to preserve and enhance the rural beauty of the Carpinteria Valley, especially its open field agriculture, and to maintain the charm of Carpinteria and Summerland as small beach towns. CVA strives to accomplish these goals by providing education and advocacy on issues related to land use, planning, and community development with an emphasis on the natural resources and environment of the Carpinteria Valley, Summerland, and the surrounding region.

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CVAction Editor:

Mike Wondolowski

We need your help

The proposed Paredon project may be the biggest threat to Carpinteria in a long time. CVA has studied the project and its impacts, and has concluded that this project should be denied outright by our City Council. Since the EIR identifies Class I ("significant, unavoidable") impacts, our City Council has the discretion to do exactly that.

In fact, due to the Class I impacts, in order to approve the project, the City Council must make findings of "overriding consideration". This means that they must conclude that the benefits of the project outweigh the impacts to the community.

The proposed final EIR identifies zero beneficial impacts of this project. Potential financial benefit is outside the scope of the required EIR review, but such benefit is highly speculative and is in no way guaranteed. There is simply no legitimate way to conclude that the possible revenue to the City is worth the very serious guaranteed and potential impacts to the community.

CVA believes that once individuals and organizations have a clear understanding of Paredon and its impacts, they will conclude that it is not even close to being a good idea.

However, this is a very complex project, and highly technical analysis is required to understand its impacts. Therefore, CVA has partnered with the Santa Barbara Environmental Defense Center (EDC) to work through the environmental review process. To allow us to keep EDC on our team, we need your help.

In addition to asking you to speak up and have your voice heard by our City Council, we are asking that you make a donation to EDC for their work on this project. Since EDC is a 501(c)3 non-profit, your donation is tax-deductible. To help EDC track that your donation is for this project, please fill out and send the green Paredon response form below with your donation directly to EDC.

We again extend our thanks to all who have contributed to CVA and/or EDC in the past. Your generosity has helped us tremendously! Paredon is the biggest issue facing us right now, but there are also many other pending projects and issues, as you can see from the other articles in this newsletter.

CVA believes that when provided accurate information, members of our community will make decisions that are the best for the future of the community. That is why our educational arm, the Carpinteria Valley Foundation (CVF, also a 501(c)3 non-profit), works so hard on public education about specific proposals, as well as the development review process. We are committed to providing the community with information and education on key issues, but this costs money. One of our biggest expenses is publishing this CVAction newsletter twice a year, but we see it as a critical service that we very much want to continue. Please consider also making a tax-deductible contribution to CVF using the white response form below. Let us know the specific topics that most concern you, as well as what type of action you are able to take to have a positive effect on the future of our community. ❖

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Contribution to EDC
to support analysis & comment on the proposed Paredon oil project

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____

Additionally, I plan to participate by:

- Commenting on the EIR in writing or at public hearings
- Sharing my opinion of the project with Carpinteria City Council members
- Writing a letter to the editor to one or more local newspapers
- Talking with my neighbors about the Paredon project

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mail this form to: EDC
906 Garden St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

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I want to help CVA!

I want to support the public education efforts of the Carpinteria Valley Foundation, CVA's educational arm. Enclosed is my donation:

- \$20 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other: \$ _____

Note: Contributions to Carpinteria Valley Foundation are deductible as charitable donations for tax purposes.

I am interested in the following issues:

- Venoco's Paredon / general oil development
- Clearwater Port LNG proposal
- Harley-Davidson expansion / noise
- Use of lands owned by the Carpinteria School District
- Greenhouses
- Open field agriculture issues
- City of Carpinteria General Plan
- City of Carpinteria planning issues
- Santa Barbara County planning issues
- Specific development proposal: _____
- Water issues
- Affordable housing issues
- Light Pollution
- Zoning enforcement
- Environmental impacts of development (e.g., traffic, parking, air quality, biological issues, etc.)

I want to help! I will help on:

- Technical analysis of environmental documents
- Attending public meetings
- Telephoning and/or mailing
- Database maintenance
- Website development and maintenance

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mail this form to us at: Carpinteria Valley Association
P.O. Box 27
Carpinteria, CA 93014

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Thanks!

