



# CVAAction

*The Newsletter of the Carpinteria Valley Association*

*CVA is an all-volunteer organization, and since our founding in 1964 we have been working to maintain the charm of Carpinteria and Summerland as small beach towns. We provide public 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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## What is Paredon?

- Paredon is an oil drilling project proposed by Venoco, the oil company presently operating the facility on the ocean bluffs at the end of Dump Road. Venoco proposed a project they named Paredon which would “slant drill” into offshore and onshore oil leases from the Carpinteria facility. Initially, a 175 foot tower would be used to drill approximately four oil wells, later a 140 foot tower would be used to drill 31 more oil wells, and then oil would be pumped for 20 years, or maybe for 30 years, or maybe even longer. Nobody knows for sure!
- In the summer of 2007, the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on Paredon was released and received extensive public review and comment. In March 2008 the proposed final EIR was released. The EIR detailed an astonishing number of adverse impacts, and not a single beneficial environmental impact of the proposed project. In addition to the visual impact of the tower, other impacts include 24/7 noise, noxious odors, increased traffic, bright night lighting, and risks of upset (oil spills, toxic chemical releases, and less-common but very dangerous blow-outs or explosions.)
- In May 2008, Carpinteria’s Environmental Review Committee voted to delay issuance of the project’s EIR until several questions about its severe impacts could be addressed.
- It appeared likely that the Carpinteria City Council would deny the project, primarily due to its 11 “Class I” impacts (significant and unavoidable, no matter what mitigations are implemented). So Venoco chose to try another approach: the paid gathering of signatures for an initiative.
- Now we have an initiative on the ballot in early 2010 that proposes a project that is even worse than the one the City Council would likely have denied!

## The Paredon Oil and Gas Development Initiative

by Mike Wondolowski



***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.*

Let’s say you have an idea that you really like. Perhaps it’s an idea that could make you a whole lot of money. If you are like most people, you would start thinking about what it would take to implement your idea. You would consider the risks associated with it, and decide if the benefit is worth the risk. The risks might only be financial. For example would you risk \$100 for a small chance of making \$1? Probably not. But if you only had to risk \$1 for a good chance of making \$100, you’d likely jump at the opportunity.

Now what if your idea involves additional non-financial risks? Would you risk your own safety by running onto a busy freeway to pick up a nickel on the road? I sure hope not! But would you walk through a field with some poison oak to pick up a bag full of \$100 bills? Many people just might.

But what if the risks extended beyond you personally? What if you could make a big profit, but your plan for making the money would be intolerable to your neighbors because it is noisy and ugly? What if it posed risks to nearby plants and animals, including endangered species? What if there is a possibility that your idea to make money would even put your neighbors’ safety at risk?

It gets pretty hard to justify you making a profit from implementing your idea if you are endangering other people, or otherwise negatively impacting them. In a civilized society, we have

norms and rules to prevent this from happening. Even if you really, *really* want to make that money, if there are too many negative effects, you just won’t be allowed to implement your plan. That’s how the system is supposed to work, and it’s what’s best for the entire community.

So let’s say that your community’s evaluation of your idea is almost done, and you see that the evaluation will identify a bunch of serious ways that your idea will hurt the community or put it at risk. You would reasonably assume that your community’s process will result in your idea being rejected. So you might stop that evaluation process, and give up on the idea. Oh well, it’s too bad your idea didn’t work out.

But if you are Venoco, and your idea is to build a giant 175-foot tall tower near the beach in Carpinteria, and to use that tower to drill for oil both onshore and offshore, and to pump the oil for 20 or 30 or more years, you take a different approach.

Venoco calls their idea “Paredon”. When the normal required environmental review of Paredon identified eleven Class I (significant and unavoidable) impacts, Venoco decided not to complete the environmental review of the project. Well, that seems reasonable – why bother finishing the analysis of a fatally flawed project?

*(see “Paredon” on pg. 2)*

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## Paredon (from page 1)

But unbelievably, Venoco chose to try another approach. They didn't like the conclusions of the standard process, so they decided to create a ballot initiative to bypass the normal planning process and try to get their project approved. But even more unbelievably, instead of changing their project to reduce the negative impacts on Carpinteria, marine life, and public safety, their initiative describes a project that is even worse than the original project previously analyzed!

In the first full analysis of Venoco's initiative, the City of Carpinteria staff report found the initiative unsatisfactory and unclear on dozens of points, including many that could result in litigation if it is approved by voters. The report also states that the initiative poses a greater risk to public safety than the originally proposed Paredon Project. Now that's quite an interesting strategy that Venoco is using: the original project had too many severe impacts, so they modified the project to *increase* the impacts!

Of even more concern is the following issue described on page 31 of the City's staff report: "The Initiative modifications make the project and mitigation measures a moving target such that what is originally approved by the voters may or may not be what is ultimately developed."

Venoco tries to emphasize the royalty monies the City might receive if the project is successful. But that takes us back to trying to figure out how much money is required to offset the risks of implementing an idea. In general, this is a difficult risk/benefit analysis. But in this case it is actually quite simple: since there is absolutely no guarantee the City will receive a nickel in royalties, the benefit could be zero. Therefore *any* impact or risk is too much.

It is unfortunate that Venoco chose to create the Paredon initiative as they have. But now that enough signatures have been gathered by Venoco's paid "volunteers", it will be on the ballot in 2010 (either in a spring special election, or in the June 8 primary election.) It will be up to the voters of Carpinteria to reject this initiative soundly, and by doing so to stand up for the community. ❖



## Tidepool Adventures by Mike Wondolowski

One of the best-kept Carpinteria secrets is that winter is the best time of year for tidepooling along our local beaches. In the winter months, the lowest low tides of the year occur, and they are often conveniently in the afternoon. This timing is perfect for exploring the exceptional tidepools off the Carpinteria State Beach and surrounding area.

Each Thursday, the Coastal View News has a tide table that lists the high and low tides for the upcoming week. What you want to look for is low tides that are lower than 0.0 feet ("negative tides"). This time of year, there are often low tides that are below -1.0 feet. These are the times that you want to drop whatever you are doing, put on some old tennis shoes, and head out to the tidepools!

The height of the tide (e.g. -1.0 feet) means what level the water is compared to the "mean low tide". So if it is negative, it means that it is lower than the average low tide. And that means that you can see all sorts of marine life that is normally underwater!

It is amazing to see all the life in the intertidal area. These plants and animals are always there, but we just can't normally get out far enough from shore, or duck under the surface of the water to see them. That's what makes these negative tides an exceptional opportunity to get a glimpse of some truly remarkable creatures. It is a good reminder to us that this habitat has a delicate balance that we can severely damage with our activities that impact the ocean.

The abundance and diversity of life can be a little overwhelming at first. And the more closely you look, the more surprises you find! The most eye-catching are definitely the variously-colored ochre sea stars. These 5-legged animals can be found colored purple, orange, and brown. You will usually find them lying flat clinging to the rock. But if you are lucky, you might find one hunched up on top of something. Usually, that means that it is dining on its favorite food: a mussel. If you look closely, you can often find areas of empty mussel shells on a rock in a tidepool, and a well-fed sea star hanging out nearby.

Many visitors' favorite is the sea anemone. Although these creatures look like some type of flower, they are actually animals. In fact, while they fasten themselves in one location, they are actually predators. They feed on various smaller animals that are unlucky enough to get caught by the anemone's tentacles.

Other tidepool residents include barnacles, urchins, crabs, small fish, octopus, and many, many others. Go for a visit and see for yourself. Then if you want to learn more about what you see, consider a visit to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's Ty Warner Sea Center on Santa Barbara's Stearns Wharf (<http://www.sbnature.org/twsc/2.html>). There you can experience many of the local tidepool creatures up close no matter what the tide level is, and have the opportunity to ask the questions that have been keeping you awake at night. ("Sea stars always look like they're just sitting there. How do they move around?")

But be warned: Once you visit our tidepools, you're likely to get hooked and want to go back again and again to see what else you can find! ❖



*Tidepool inhabitants include sea stars, urchins, anemones, and many other creatures, all just waiting for you to visit!*



*The area's best tidepools are directly off Carpinteria State Beach.*



## Something Else That Makes Carpinteria Special

### *Our Neighbors: the Harbor Seals*

by Susan Allen

Carpinteria is home to a unique resource – the Carpinteria Harbor Seal Sanctuary located just east of the Casitas Pier. The area serves as both a haulout which accommodates harbor seals throughout the year, and a rookery (a birthing area). Only four rookeries are located on the Southern California coast, and only Carpinteria affords both easy access and the ability to view large numbers of harbor seals and newborn pups. Pups begin arriving in January, with peak season typically in February and March. Many visitors have watched pups being born, take their first swim and nurse on the beach. Mother seals brush and “nose tap” their pups. When they bring them to shore they often piggy back the pups to get them safely through the waves. In early 2009, up to 70-75 seal pups were seen on shore. Adult seals often number over 200.



In 1990 a group of concerned residents formed Carpinteria Sealwatch.

Volunteers work 2 hour shifts all week during pupping season. They provide information and collect data, including numbers of adults and pups. They also track disturbances and occasionally turn back beach walkers who have failed to observe the beach closure signs. Visitors come to the sanctuary from all over the world and marvel at this resource. Recent years have seen over 20,000 visitors viewing the seals from the designated viewing area.

The City of Carpinteria closes the rookery beach area and adjacent water from December 1 to June 1 by ordinance. The protection of the resource is necessary because although many local harbor seals have become adapted to human activity on the bluff and pier, they will flee when approached on the beach from land or sea. Stampeded seals may trample pups or cause mothers to become separated from their pups.



Harbor seals, as well as all other marine mammals, are also protected by the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act, which prohibits harassment including disturbance of the animals' behavior patterns.

Harbor seals spend their lives along one area of coastline, sometimes estimated as about a 100 mile radius. While they will forage within the range for food, they do not migrate, but will use a haulout all year if not disturbed. In Carpinteria the seals are often mistakenly believed to have “migrated” during the summer, when in fact they have only abandoned daytime use of the beach because of beachwalkers who may not realize that the first walkers or joggers have chased them into the water. After repeated disturbances the seals will give up for the day.

In fact, the highest harbor seal counts have occurred during the molting season in early morning and night in September and October – a daytime high of 365 and a nighttime high of around 480.

Harbor seals are among the “true seals,” which are distinguished by the lack of external ear flaps, and the “slug like” locomotion along the beach. They cannot walk on their hind and front flippers like sea lions, and they do not bark like sea lions. Harbor seals are far rarer than sea lions – recent census numbers for all of California are in the 30,000 range, whereas sea lions and elephant seals number in the hundreds of thousands. Harbor seals are relatively small, weighing up to about 300 pounds. Males do not fight for harems, and the rookery area is peacefully populated by both males and females.

We are truly fortunate to have the opportunity to witness these animals' life cycle so easily in Carpinteria, and fortunate that the City of Carpinteria and many citizens have recognized the need to afford a safe home for the seals.

So take a stroll on the bluffs and visit these remarkable marine neighbors of ours! ❖

## Bob Hansen Retires from CVA Board

We salute Bob Hansen on his retirement from our board, after many years of faithful service. Bob has been a real asset, enriching our discussions with his knowledge both of birds and of riparian habitats. As co-founder of the Carpinteria Creek Committee in 1989, he spearheaded restoration efforts along the creek, negotiating with developers, ranchers, flood control officials, and city and county agencies to restore habitat and to prevent loss of riparian areas. As a CVA board member, Bob has been our watchdog on any proposed development involving wetlands. His expertise in legal setbacks for creeks and wetlands has been brought to bear on many projects, from the Carpinteria Bluffs to the proposals for Lagunitas and the Green Heron Spring project on former wetlands on Cravens Lane.

Bob and his wife Miggie settled in Carpinteria after Bob's retirement from Occidental College in 1987, where he was a Professor of Art. During his academic career, Bob received a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship and Fulbright Grant, which enabled him to spend a year studying art in India and Southeast Asia. His work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

CVA has been honored to have such a talented, modest, and energetic man in our midst. Many thanks, Bob, for a job well done. ❖

## CVF Garner's Grant from Fund for Santa Barbara

The Carpinteria Valley Foundation has received a \$10,000 grant to help fund legal assistance in its efforts to defeat Venoco's controversial Paredon Project. The award comes from the Fund for Santa Barbara, a non-profit foundation that supports grassroots organizations working for social, economic and environmental justice in Santa Barbara County.

CVF, the nonprofit 501(c)(3) arm of the Carpinteria Valley Association, was one of 14 organizations to receive funding, among 60 groups applying. CVF and CVA have retained the ongoing services of the Environmental Defense Center in challenging Venoco's Paredon Project. CVF and CVA maintain that the oil drilling scheme poses an unacceptable threat to ground water quality and human health, as well as to the rest of the environment. ❖

## Green Heron Spring Development by Vera Bensen

The Green Heron Spring plan for 30 units above Franciscan Village on Cravens Lane passed the City Council, and then went to the Coastal Commission who passed it with modifications. At the April 6th Planning Commission meeting, the Commission OK'd the modifications and sent them on to the City Council. These modifications will change our General Plan and the Local Coastal plan for this 3.8 acres ag. parcel. The goal is to safeguard this particular property in the future in case the project is not built now. At the time that the City of Carpinteria originally approved this project, the overriding consideration was an imagined need for more housing. However, since that time, the Lavender Court housing project has been built in downtown Carpinteria, and the units are still difficult to sell. The same is true for other new speculation homes built in Carpinteria in the past few years. It is extremely important that we protect our agricultural zoned valley lands, so we hope that there are no further annexations.

The present project is considered “green” and will have a platinum LEED (the highest) classification for energy savings and environmental concerns. CVA hopes that the city suggests or requires that future development to be “green”. However, no matter what green development guidelines are placed on this property, this will be the first time in about 40 years that our city's urban-rural boundary line has changed. CVA would like to guard against any further development encroaching into our valuable agricultural lands. Rather than only requiring an “adequate buffer”, CVA hopes the city will designate a definite minimum buffer distance to protect these lands. ❖



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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

# A Well-Deserved Reputation

Carpinteria has a well-deserved reputation of being a laid-back beach town. There are many families who eagerly look forward to their annual visit to Carpinteria, either to camp at the State Beach, or to stay in a condo somewhere within walking distance of the beach. For some of these families, their annual visit is a tradition that goes back more than a generation!

Locals are lucky enough to be here year-round, and see the peak summertime crowds, as well as the nearly abandoned beaches in wintertime when a parking spot can be found on Linden Avenue within steps of anyplace you might want to go.

But Carpinteria is not the way it is today by accident. Rather, it has taken generations of vision, commitment, perseverance, and hard work to maintain the essential character of our small beach town. For example, in 1968, a County referendum resulted in the repeal of a zoning ordinance amendment which would have permitted a large oil refinery by Humble Oil on the Carpinteria Bluffs. CVA is proud that as an organization only four years old at the time, it played a key role in that effort over 40 years ago.

Then in 1971, CVA joined in a community-wide effort to defeat a rezoning attempt that would have permitted use of the Carpinteria Salt Marsh for a marina with related commercial developments on both sides of the freeway. Boy, that would have been a game-changer for Carpinteria!

In 1975 and subsequent years, a number of intensive residential/commercial developments were proposed for the Carpinteria Bluffs. The community pushed back hard on each proposal, successfully maintaining the Bluffs as open space. Then in the fall of 1997, the Citizens for the Carpinteria Bluffs began working with the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County on the complex negotiations required to purchase the Bluffs. A remarkable grassroots fundraising campaign to raise \$3,950,000 began in August 1998, and just four months later, escrow was closed on December 30, 1998. By October 1999, a total of \$4,500,000 had been raised. This allowed the Citizens for the Carpinteria Bluffs and the Land Trust to formally transfer the 52-acre Bluffs property to the City of Carpinteria in October 2000 for permanent stewardship, along with a \$500,000 endowment fund for maintenance expenses.

What an amazing accomplishment!

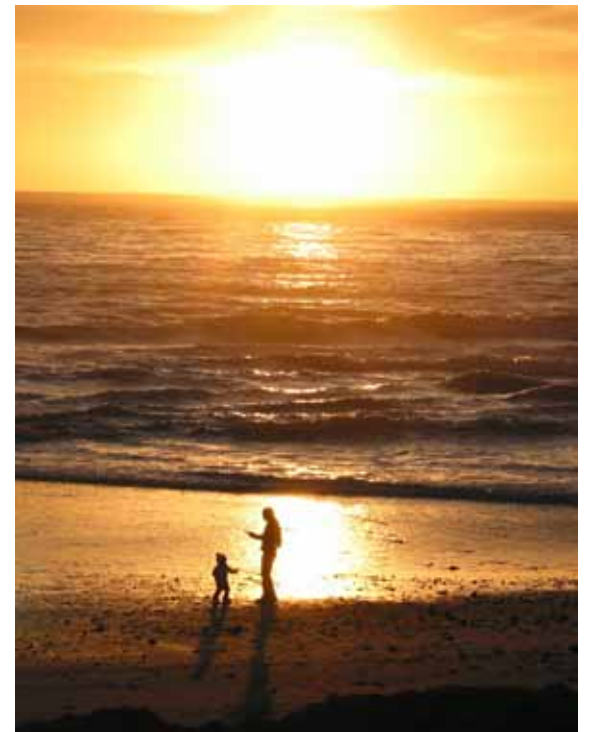
There is constant development pressure throughout the Carpinteria Valley, and the community must maintain constant vigilance to ensure preservation of the character of our town. Attempts to convert agricultural lands to more intensive uses frequently require a response. Proposals that include inadequate setbacks from urban streams must be handled. But today, by far the biggest threat to our community is the Paredon Proposal. This is another idea that definitely makes the short list of projects that could single-handedly destroy the essence of what Carpinteria is, both to the locals, and to the periodic visitors.

As a community, we have overcome huge obstacles before, and won seemingly unwinnable battles. So we know we have the ability to stand up for our community. Now we need to determine if we have the will and the perseverance to stand up for it yet again. CVA believes we can and we must.

Since the 1990's, we have had a City Council that has made Carpinteria's small town charm a priority. And they have done this successfully, while managing to be fiscally sound despite the state's budget woes and generally insecure financial times.

But addressing threats to our community is not work that can be accomplished by any one individual, or any one group, or even solely by our elected officials. It requires all the members of the community working together to maintain our collective vision of what Carpinteria is and should be. Use the form below to let us know what's most important to you and how you want to make a difference. There are many ways for you to play a role, and we very much want to talk with you about what you can do.

Carpinteria does have a well-deserved reputation of being a laid-back beach town. But that reputation relies on all of us working hard to maintain it as a reality. ❖



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Photo on page 1 from Paredon Draft EIR. All other photos by Mike Wondolowski.

## 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, a 501(c)(3) organization, are deductible as charitable donations for tax purposes.

**I am interested in the following issues:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Venoco's Paredon proposal                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable housing issues   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of lands owned by the Carpinteria School District | <input type="checkbox"/> Light Pollution   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouses   | <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning enforcement  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open field agriculture issues                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental impacts of development (e.g., traffic, parking, air quality, biological issues, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City of Carpinteria General Plan / planning issues    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Barbara County planning issues                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carpinteria Water District / general water issues     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specific development proposal: _____                  |  |

**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  
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*Fall 2009 CVAction newsletter*

**Thanks!**



*On our website, you can find a full-color version of this newsletter, as well as past editions!*