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ExxonMobil Oil Trucking Plan Jeopardized by Refinery Shutdown, County Staff Opposition to Using Dangerous Route 166

Opponents Call on Company Not To Restart Offshore Drilling in Santa Barbara

SANTA BARBARA, *Calif.* – ExxonMobil’s plans to restart its offshore drilling platforms in Santa Barbara County and truck that oil through California have been undermined by two unrelated announcements. Opponents responded today by calling on the company to abandon the project and decommission its offshore operations.

Santa Barbara County planning staff yesterday released [a report](#) opposing the use of State Route 166 to truck oil to Kern County, saying that use of this route would increase the likelihood of accidents and oil spills. Then Phillips 66 [announced](#) late yesterday that it will close its Santa Maria Refinery and related pipelines by 2023, shutting down the other option for ExxonMobil to get its offshore oil to a refinery.

“We call on ExxonMobil to withdraw its risky oil project,” said Linda Krop, chief counsel for the Environmental Defense Center, which represents Get Oil Out! and Santa Barbara County Action Network. “ExxonMobil’s proposal was already ill-conceived from an environmental and climate justice point of view, and now it is unsuitable in light of Phillips’ plans to convert its refinery to renewable fuels. There is even less reason now for ExxonMobil to put our coast and communities at risk.”

Exxon’s trucking plan called for up to 70 oil tanker trucks per day on coastal Highway 101 and Route 166, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Santa Barbara County Planning Commission is scheduled to hold hearings on the project on Sept. 2 and Sept. 9 before deciding whether to recommend approval, but those hearings may be postponed by the new developments.

“This is great news for California communities, motorists and wildlife threatened by ExxonMobil’s dangerous oil trucking plan. Exxon should follow Phillips 66’s lead and end its dirty energy operations on California’s Central Coast,” said Kristen Monsell,

oceans legal director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “With the oil industry reeling, it’s time to end offshore drilling along this beautiful, bountiful coastline, not revive it.”

ExxonMobil’s platforms were shut down in 2015 after the Plains All American Pipeline ruptured and spilled hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil along the California coast. The company proposed to restart its platforms, load its offshore oil onto tanker trucks at its Las Flores Canyon processing facility, and truck up to 470,400 gallons of oil per day to facilities in Kern County and Santa Maria.

California suffers hundreds of oil-truck incidents a year, and many result in oil spills. There were 216 trucking accidents along ExxonMobil’s proposed route from 2015 to 2020, California Highway Patrol [data show](#), resulting in nine deaths and 92 injuries. A tanker [truck crashed](#) off Highway 166 on March 21, spilling more than 4,500 gallons of oil into the Cuyama River above Twitchell Reservoir.

More reactions from groups that are part of the coalition opposing the ExxonMobil trucking plan:

“Exxon’s oil trucking plan was already extremely controversial, with cities of San Luis Obispo, Goleta, Santa Barbara and Carpinteria all passing resolutions calling for denial of the project,” said Katie Davis, chair of the Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter. “Given the pending closure of the Santa Maria pump station and even longer and more dangerous route, it’s time to take trucking oil off the table entirely.”

University of California at Santa Barbara’s Associated Students Environmental Affairs Board and Environmental Justice Alliance released a joint comment: “As UCSB students, we are glad to see our region move one step further from fossil fuel infrastructure that endangers all of our communities. We are happy to see that Phillips 66 recognizes that there is no future for drilling on the Central Coast, and hope that Exxon will quickly recognize the futility of its oil trucking proposal. It’s time to transition away from fossil fuels and toward a just, sustainable, and equitable future.”

“The exploitation of oil in the Chumash homelands has brought untold economic, environmental, and social devastation to our peoples for well over a century,” said Alicia Cordero, First Nations program officer for Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation. “We are heartened to finally see communities all throughout Santa Barbara County standing with us against these injustices while facing down the last gasps of the dying local oil industry.”

The coalition opposing ExxonMobil’s trucking plan includes Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation, 350 Santa Barbara, Center for Biological Diversity, Environmental Defense Center, UCSB Environmental Justice Alliance, UCSB Environmental Affairs Board, Food and Water Action, GOO!, SBCAN, Sierra Club’s Los Padres Chapter, UCSB Academic Senator Esmeralda Quintero-Cubillan, Surfrider Foundation Santa Barbara County Chapter, Los Padres ForestWatch.

