

COALITION TO PROTECT SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY (CoProSLOCo)

HISTORY OF OIL THREATS IN OUR REGION

1926: Union Oil's Tank Farm Road oil storage facility was struck by lightning which set off a series of explosions and fires. This event, involving 14 reservoirs and 8 million barrels of oil, was the worst environmental disaster to hit the Central Coast. Flaming oil covered 900 acres of land and to starve the fire, a massive amount was pumped into the ocean.

1969: In nearby Santa Barbara Channel, Union Oil's offshore platform "Holly" blew out its safety valve and gushed oil into the ocean and beaches for 11 days before being capped. This gave rise to a national environmental movement which resulted in the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970.

1986: In response to the Federal government's proposed leasing of offshore oil drilling permits, a citizen's initiative was passed by the voters of SLO County to ban any onshore infrastructure (such as pipelines, storage, or pump stations) in support of offshore oil or gas development.

1988: California's worst oil spill, at the Union Oil Guadalupe oil field, was uncovered by surfers and fisherman and reported by whistleblowers. Known about by company officials for decades but kept secret, up to 9 million gallons of oil were leaked into the dune complex that straddles SLO and SB counties. It remains the largest oil spill in continental US history and is still being cleaned up 30 years later. Executives and operators were originally charged with criminal violations, later reduced to civil charges.

1994: It was discovered by local Avila Beach residents that there was a massive oil spill under their homes and businesses. Over many decades, corroded pipes that ran under the town, from the hilltop tank farm to the Union Oil pier, had leaked over 400,000 gallons of toxic petroleum.

2014: Phillips 66 proposed to build a crude oil train terminal at its Nipomo Dunes refinery in San Luis Obispo County (the same location involved in the Unocal Guadalupe Dunes oil spill). They wanted to import Alberta tar sand oil in mile long oil tanker trains, despite 13 documented negative and significant environment and public health threats. A local and statewide grassroots opposition was successful in convincing the County Planning Commission and County Supervisors to deny the project.



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