

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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January 27, 2000

**TO:** Coastal Commissioners and Interested Parties

**FROM:** Jaime C. Kooser, Deputy Director  
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**SUBJECT:** **Guadalupe Oil Field Spill Remediation Status Report – February 2000**

**Staff Note:**

*This status report provides an account of abandonment and cleanup activities occurring at the Guadalupe site for the period December 10, 1999–January 24, 2000. Some of these are ongoing activities authorized under San Luis Obispo CDP/DP D870558D, and others began following Coastal Commission approval of CDP No. E-99-009 on November 3, 1999.*

**SITE ACTIVITIES, DECEMBER 10, 1999 –JANUARY 24, 2000****Activities Occurring in the Coastal Commission's Coastal Permit Jurisdiction****5X West Cell 1 Excavation**

- On December 20, 1999, Unocal completed the 5X site excavation for Cell 1. By that afternoon, after soil samples were collected and analyzed, the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) had approved the backfilling of the northern half of Cell 1.
- Approximately 65,000 cubic yards of contaminated material and 160 barrels of skimmed product were removed from Cell 1.
- The average total petroleum hydrocarbon (TPH) level for these samples was approximately 80 ppm, far below the 700 ppm backfilling standard established by the RWQCB.
- Dredging equipment was not required to “polish” the bottom of the pit.

- Wildlife hazing methods including the use of mylar strips, "zon" guns, loud recorded music and falcon calls were used when the excavation pit became too large for netting to be used.
- A twin-barrel drum skimmer collected approximately 160 barrels of petroleum product.
- Prior to backfilling, nutrients were sprayed into the bottom of the pit to facilitate microbial breakdown of the remaining hydrocarbons.
- On December 21, 1999, the RWQCB authorized the backfilling of the entire Cell 1 site and on December 30, 1999, the backfilling of Cell 1 was completed.
- Backfilling sources included screened sand at the TB8 stockpile site, approximately 10,000 cubic yards of sand from the Q12 Borrow site, and overburden material on Cell 2.

#### 5X West Cell 2 Excavation

- Unocal began removing overburden material from Cell 2 on December 30, 1999.
- As with Cell 1, Unocal contractors were able to excavate Cell 2 to target elevations without the use of dredging and desanding equipment.
- On January 17, 2000, the RWQCB approved the backfilling of Cell 2 in its entirety. An average TPH level of 49.8 ppm was reported. Roughly 65,000 cubic yards of contaminated material and 150 barrels of skimmed product were removed from Cell 2.
- Backfill sources include 20,000 cubic yards at C6/C7 and 50,000 cubic yards from the recently San Luis Obispo County permitted Q4 Borrow Site.

#### Entire 5X West Site

- The 5X excavation and backfilling activity is coming to a conclusion, as planned, in anticipation of the March 1 snowy plover nesting season.
- Unocal will not cover the 5X West site with a vegetated topsoil layer until after the completion of the 5X East site excavation next year. The sheetpile wall along the eastern edge of the site will remain until next year and will be buried with several feet of sand.
- Unocal removed the dredge, desander, and electrical facilities from the site.
- After January 21, 2000, netting and wildlife hazing were no longer necessary due to the filling of remaining water inside the excavation pit.

#### Loop Road Violation

- Unocal has indicated to staff that they will submit a separate coastal development permit application by the end of January 2000 for the removal of road aggregate placed on the loop road without a permit.

### Other Activities

- Unocal attempted to remove the west wing of the sheetpile wall installed during the 5X Emergency Action in 1996. Due to the extended time this sheetpile has been in place and the proximity of the wall to water, a rusty bond has formed between the individual wall sheets. Unocal's contractors were unable to remove more than five sheets after several hours. They plan on removing the west wing wall by exposing and removing the H-beams installed in 1996 to stabilize the wall against hydrostatic pressure from the Santa Maria River. A backhoe or excavator will be used on the beach to complete this activity.
- Sheetpile along the west, south, and north sections of Cells 1 and 2 was scheduled for removal on January 26, 2000.
- Unocal biologists continue to monitor and survey (twice a week) western snowy plovers foraging along the beach and in the lagoon. Over 100 individual plovers have been recorded in the area of the lagoon.

### Activities Occurring in San Luis Obispo County's Coastal Permit Jurisdiction

#### Q4 Borrow Site

- A recent concern of the resource agencies is the significant increase, approximately 1.7 fold, in the actual amount of contaminated materials excavated at 5X Cell 2 compared to the amount of contaminated materials Unocal originally estimated was in need of excavation. Underestimating the actual excavation amounts directly affects the amount and source of backfill materials, and the associated impacts of removing, storing, and treating additional materials. In response to a need for additional Cell 2 backfill materials, on January 6, 2000, the County of San Luis Obispo issued a grading permit to Unocal allowing the removal of 50,000 cubic yards of backfill material from the Q4 borrow site in order not to delay the backfilling of Cell 2 and potentially encroach into snowy plover nesting season, (beginning March 1) a violation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biological Opinion. On January 19, 2000, Unocal began removing borrow material from Q4.

Resources agencies are working with Unocal to ensure that projected contaminated excavation amounts at other project sites more accurately reflect the amounts actually excavated. For example, Unocal has recently raised its estimate of C8 contaminated materials proposed to be excavated.

#### Other Activities

- Unocal plans on submitting a C8 Site-Specific Restoration Plan to relevant agencies by February 14, 2000 in anticipation of a March 15 excavation start date.
- Interim restoration activities at the 8X site have been completed. Topsoil and beach bur seed have been placed onto the slope and covered with jute netting to stabilize the soil.
- Unocal has completed pipeline abandonment work at the C8 site.

