

OJAI VALLEY NEWS



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Study: Upper Ojai exposed to toxins

Kimberly Rivers

Ojai Valley News correspondent

An air study using infrared analysis, air sampling and health surveys has found that Upper Ojai is exposed to at least 15 different toxins linked with oil and gas production.

"When we began our research for this report nearly a year ago, we discovered a disturbing lack of data specific to California on the health effects from oil and gas development in our state," said Jhon Arbelaez, California organizer for Earthworks, the group which conducted the study. The national nonprofit organization is aimed at protecting communities and the environment from adverse impacts of mineral and energy development.

"We were able to show that communities in Upper Ojai and Lost Hills, in Kern County, are being exposed to air contaminants typically associated with oil and gas development." Arbelaez

did emphasize the results of this study are not "generalized results," and "we do not attempt to directly link air emission from oil and gas in California to health symptoms experienced by citizens living close to these facilities." Health effects reported by participants in the health survey in Upper Ojai included burning eyes, throat irritation, increased fatigue, loss of memory, nosebleeds, headaches and digestive issues. "These symptoms are consistent with exposure to air emissions from oil and gas, the same emissions we detected during air sampling."

"We know there are a host of pollutants and toxic chemicals in oil and gas extraction processes," said Assemblymember Das Williams (District 37). "This study confirms the obvious: that people living next to these oil and gas operations are being hurt. It

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Ojai Valley News photo by Bill Warner

Can the botanically undesirable elements of the Ojai Valley Trail withstand the combined rigors of cinnamon and clove? The Ventura County Parks Department wants to know.

County tests organic cinnamon herbicide on Ojai Valley Trail

Bill Warner

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The Ojai Valley Trail might seem slightly more aromatic than usual these days, but cyclists and pedestrians shouldn't think their senses are deceiving them. That sweet scent of cinnamon is coming from an organic herbicide recently sprayed on broadleaf weeds along the trail's course from Ojai to Foster Park.

The Ventura County Parks Department is trying out a product known as Weed Zap, said Theresa Lubin, manager of maintenance and opera-

tions. Weed Zap is one of several organic herbicides consisting mainly of cinnamon and clove oils. If effective, she said, it could become a viable alternative to glyphosate, the weed-control chemical currently used by the department.

Lubin said the applications, which began about a week ago, concluded on Wednesday near Foster Park. It would be about two more weeks, she said, before the department would assess the results. So far, the Ojai Valley Trail

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Impacts of Sespe drilling 'significant and unavoidable,' draft report says

Kimberly Rivers

Ojai Valley News correspondent

A statewide Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) finds impacts from oil and gas activity are likely to be "significant and unavoidable" in the Sespe Oil Field, which is located within Los Padres National Forest.

The California Department of Conservation, Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) is accepting public comment regarding the DEIR, which examines impacts from oil and gas production and well stimulation techniques across the state. The report includes a focused study of impacts on the Sespe Oil Field, along with two other fields in other counties.

"DOGGR has traditionally been seen as closely allied with the industry," asserts Alasdair Coyne, a resident of Upper Ojai and conservation director with Keep the Sespe Wild, a local organization focused on protecting the Sespe River and surrounding areas. "DOGGR has not gone after the industry to restrain its practices. But thanks to Sen. Fran Pavley's Senate Bill 4 (SB-4), DOGGR has produced this lengthy report on fracking, selecting the Sespe Oilfield as one of its three sites to evaluate in depth. The conclusions include a ban on further fracking in the Sespe oilfield, which Keep the Sespe Wild whole-heartedly supports."

Some parts of the report appear to repeat what some groups have been saying all along. "This report confirms our worst fears, that fracking in the Los Padres National Forest has caused and will continue to cause significant risks to the environment," said Jeff Kuyper, executive director of Los Padres Forest-Watch. "Consistent with the findings in this report, our national forest should be placed off-limits to fracking immediately. We cannot risk ruining this treasured landscape and threatening the water supply of downstream communities." Kuyper said Los Padres National Forest is the only national forest in California with oil drilling and fracking taking place within its boundaries.

The public comment period ends March 16 and DOGGR will conduct six public hearings across the state to receive verbal public input regarding the DEIR; DOGGR is also accepting written comments. The first public meeting will take place in Ventura Feb. 10 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Ventura College Performing Arts Center.

The DEIR examines potential impacts of well stimulation treatments across the state, with a focused study on three oil fields, including the Sespe Oil and Gas Field in Ventura County, located above the community of Fillmore. "Because of the programmatic review of (those fields), it is more likely that proposed well stimulation treatment permits in those fields will be found to be within the scope of the project covered by this EIR," stated the report.

The Impacts

In considering the likelihood of well stimulation processes being used in the future in the Sespe Oil Field, the report found that field is susceptible to Class I type impacts. Class I impacts are defined as "significant and unavoidable impacts." According to the study, "These impacts are related to air quality, biological resources (terrestrial environment), cultural resources, greenhouse gas emission, recreation, risk of upset/public and worker safety and transportation and traffic."

The tables listing all the impacts go on for more than 20 pages.

"The report identifies seven significant and unavoidable Class I impacts caused by fracking in the Sespe Oil Field," states a press release from Los Padres ForestWatch. "The report also identifies Alternative I (prohibiting all current and future fracking and other high-intensity well stimulation activities) as the environmentally superior alternative for the Sespe Oil Field."

The EIR includes other possible alternatives to the project. To be considered viable in the EIR, alternatives should adhere to the objectives of the overall project, but provide options that "would avoid or substantially

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Photo by Vicki Hunt

Ojai's Explorers don their gas masks in preparation for an event that simulates a school shooting. They returned from the competition with three trophies.

Ojai Explorers display law enforcement skills

Last week the Ojai Law Enforcement Explorers returned to Chandler, Ariz. to participate in the 17th annual SWAT Explorer Competition, and they didn't leave empty-handed.

Eight Ojai Explorers — out of the 10 based at the Ojai Police Station — participated in the event, which tested their abilities in several aspects of law enforcement. Participants from Ojai ranged in age from 15 to 20 and included: Donald Jones, Jesus Garcia, Gilbert Brambilla, Benjamin Wise, Sachini Rajapaksa, Esmeralda Zamudio, Josh Williams and Jessica Zamudio.

Competing against more than 800 Explorers from several states, the Ojai team brought home trophies in three events: Robot Operations, where they used law enforcement robotics to accomplish their mission; 5-Man HRT, where they sent in a team for hostage rescue; and the TK-4 SWAT armored truck push/pull.

Over the three-day Chandler competition, Ojai's team worked through numerous tactical scenarios which tested them on skills such as strength, communication, teamwork, perseverance, resilience and adaptability. After each exercise, the group were critiqued by SWAT officers, deputies and other law enforcement professionals. In between strategic events, there were individual and team events that

continued to provide challenges testing Explorers' determination, mental focus and physical strength.

Participants in the Chandler Tactical Competition are evaluated on a number of criteria to establish a winner for each event, such as: pace/speed of competition; overall plan and execution of mission including contingency plans; safety, muzzle control and use of cover/concealment; time to complete event; communication and teamwork between team members; identification of threats or threat areas; actions taken against threats; decision-making; command presence; and leadership.

Law Enforcement Exploring provides educational training programs for young adults on the purposes, mission and objectives of law enforcement. In addition to receiving tactical training, Explorers participate in a variety of community service and traffic details around the Ojai Valley. Law Enforcement Career Exploring is open to young men and women between the ages of 14 (must have completed the eighth grade) and 20, who have an interest in learning more about careers in the field of law enforcement.

For more information on how to join the Ojai Explorer program, contact Deputy Greg Lindsay at the Ojai Police Station, 646-1414.



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Sespe:

Continued from Page A1

lessen any of the significant effects of the project." Alternatives recognized but ultimately discarded by the report include "a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing until completion of the EIR, use of alternative energy as an alternative to the project, integrating all of the most stringent regulations under a most stringent alternative," and requiring non-toxic chemicals for use in all well stimulation processes and waterless hydraulic fracturing techniques.

Some of the alternatives which were considered in the EIR include: No future well treatments, no future well treatments outside of existing oil and

gas field boundaries, well pad consolidation and active fault zone restrictions.

The report is required under new regulations pursuant to the recently passed Senate Bill 4 (SB-4), The Pavley Bill. SB-4 represents first-time well stimulation processes were specifically regulated in the state of California. According to the report, only processes aimed at increasing the amount of oil extracted by "increasing the permeability of the formation" are under the purview of the DEIR. Those processes include "hydraulic fracturing, acid fracturing and acid matrix stimulation."

Critics of the regulatory

process created by SB-4 have pointed to the fact that the final regulations were released Jan. 1, 2015 — prior to the EIR being finalized. The regulations go into effect July 1. The DEIR will be revised after the public comment period and the final EIR will be submitted for public review.

"How can a Draft EIR be circulated after the final regulations have been circulated?" asked Tom Williams, Ph.D., a lifetime member of the Sierra Club of California who also holds doctorates in geology and zoology from the University of California at Berkeley. He has consulted for more than 15 oil and gas companies across the globe,

as well as the government of Dubai. He explained an effective EIR should be targeted to a particular use or project, and he does not see the statewide scope as meeting that requirement for an effective EIR. Normally, an EIR is done with a very specific project in mind—from housing developments to oil wells. The location is key to the environmental findings. And while Williams concedes some specific locations are considered in the DEIR, he said, "It's a start, but for what purpose? The DEIR doesn't know what the purpose, need or objectives of the project are."

The EIR statement of objectives reads, "This

EIR has not been prepared in response to a specific project proposal, but rather is an information document regarding the potential impacts of well stimulation which may serve to inform other California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents." The objectives also include the goal of providing other local regulatory agencies with information "to efficiently and effectively evaluate future permit applications for proposed oil and gas well stimulation practices."

"This is a watershed moment for the future of fracking in California," said Coyne of Keep the Sespe Wild. "Further restrictions on fracking in

California may be on the way."

The draft report is fairly massive, with the executive summary alone being 108 pages. That is only one of around 30 sections.

The full DEIR can be viewed online at www.conservation.ca.gov/dog/SB4DEIR/Pages/SB4_DEIR_TOC.aspx, and public comments can be submitted in writing on or before March 16 via email to SB4EIR@conservation.ca.gov. Comments can also be mailed to:

Ms. Adele Lagomarsino, California Department of Conservation Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources, 801 K Street, MS 18-00, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Herbicide:

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is the only area of the county in which the Parks Department has applied the substance.

Ojai Valley resident and activist Patty Pagaling was pleased by the effort. "We've been talking with the county for several years about nontoxic alternatives to glyphosate," she said. "We were happy to hear it was Weed Zap."

Pagaling is director of the Ojai-based Transition to Organics, a group striving to raise awareness of nontoxic alternatives for controlling weeds and pests in agriculture and gardening. Last year, she said, her organization had sent the Parks Department a list of herbicide alternatives, Weed Zap being one of them.

Pagaling said she knew of at least one landscaper who had used a cinnamon-clove herbicide in broad application and reported good results. Also, she cited the town of Arcata as one of several municipalities in northern California to have

stopped using glyphosate altogether in favor of organic methods.

Neither Lubin nor Pagaling were aware of any health hazards related to casual contact with Weed Zap post-application. Product literature does recommend long-sleeved shirts, trousers, gloves and protective eyewear for those handling or applying the substance.

But even if Weed Zap proves effective against the trail's current crop of undesirable vegetation, its financial cost might not. "This product is more expensive than the current product we use," Lubin said. If it becomes apparent that more of the Weed Zap is required to control the same amount of weeds knocked down by a smaller amount of glyphosate, then the department budget will be unlikely to accommodate use of the organic herbicide.

Scientific studies have indicated such cinna-

Want to comment on these reports? Write a letter to the editor: editor@ojaivalleynews.com

mon-clove herbicides as Weed Zap to have their greatest efficacy in applications to broadleaf and grassy weeds, Lubin said. A different kind of challenge, also prevalent along the Ojai Valley Trail, is presented by tribulus terrestris, better known as "puncture vine." The fruit of the puncture vine produces spiky burs capable of piercing bicycle tires, and it is generally regarded as remarkably painful when stepped upon by pets or barefoot pet owners. And Weed Zap is not considered an effective remedy for puncture vine, Lubin said. The herbicide of choice in that instance would be glyphosate, which she said the department will be applying again this year in the March-to-April abatement period, the time of year in which tribulus terrestris tends to make its first appearance.

Air:

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should make us angry that there is not enough state regulation to protect our friends and neighbors from the health impacts of oil and gas."

"Air samples revealed the presence of 15 compounds known to have negative effects on human health, such as methane, acetone, hexane, isoprene and acetaldehyde," said Arbelaez. Last year during the study, Arbelaez used a FLIR infrared camera at an active gas well in front of Fire Station 20 in Upper Ojai. He had asked the Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD) for permission to take air samples at that location, but VCFD refused, saying



Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet to view the Earthworks report in its entirety.

they were already monitoring the air around the station. But manufacturers of the sensor system at the station said it was only meant to detect methane — and even then, only what would be seeping out of the sub-surface, not what could be coming out of nearby wells. "Sample results also revealed the presence of an additional 11 compounds for which health data is not avail-

able, such as pentane and dodecane."

The study was partly funded by The California Wellness Foundation, a private foundation with a mission to provide grants to projects geared to improving the health of Californians.

To view the full report visit: www.earthworksaction.org/library/detail/californians_at_risk_full_report#.VMFrVhZ_pHg.

For more news, see Page A8

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE OJAI PLANNING COMMISSION Municipal Code Amendment Revising the City of Ojai's Telecommunications Regulations



NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Ojai Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider and make a recommendation to the City Council regarding Municipal Code Amendment revising the City of Ojai's Telecommunication regulations (Section 10-2.712) and the associated California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) determination as exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines § 15061(b)(3) as a project that has no potential to cause a significant effect on the environment. The meeting will be on Wednesday, February 4, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Ojai City Hall, 401 S. Ventura Street, Ojai, California. Any interested party may appear before said Commission and present their views. The proposed ordinance will be effective City-wide.

The proposed ordinance establishes the following:

- Definitions of terms
- Applicable Facilities
- Application procedures
- Regulations for facilities subject to a conditional use permit
- Regulation for facilities subject to a design review permit
- Independent Consultant review regulations.
- Maintenance regulations
- Regulations for the removal of abandoned facilities
- Ownership transfer regulations
- Permit terms; permit conditions
- Exceptions from standards regulations
- Conflicts with other ordinances or regulations
- Severability regulations

The proposed ordinance is available at the City of Ojai at 401 S. Ventura, Ojai Ca or at the city website at www.ci.ojai.ca.us

You can contact Kathleen Wold, Community Development Director at 805-646-5581 x113, or email questions or comments to wold@ci.ojai.ca.us.

HELP OF OJAI Holiday Tree Names

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- In memory of Lorraine Crowder; Beverly Spurgeon
- In memory of Harriett Donnell; Mickey and Robin Johnston
- In memory of Red and Marge Dunahee; Donna Tilmont-Busch
- In memory of Louis Egus; Patricia Egus
- In memory of John Richard Felton; Huora Williams
- In memory of Pat Fitzsimmons; Tom and Rebecca Lowe
- In honor of The Gables of Ojai; Norma Hughes
- In memory of Robert Hamm; Sharon Booth
- In memory of Jack C. Hayden and Gin-Gin; Sachiko Hayden
- In memory of Toni McLennan; Carlene Sikorsky
- In memory of Mary Ann Huffaker; Rosalyn Milbank-Tuttle
- In memory of Kathleen Jamison; John and Sally Iwata
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- In memory of Hattie and Harold Rice; Sidney and Jayne Rice
- In memory of Richard Saxby; Shirley Saxby
- In memory of Craig Silsbee; Chris and Mary Moore
- In memory of Bruce Thomas; John and Sally Iwata
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- In memory of Henry Villierme; Barbara Villierme
- In memory of Bill von Moltke; June Vasquez von Moltke
- In memory of Jack H. Weedon; Mary Frances Weedon
- In memory of Michael Werber; Helen Gehrke
- In memory of Michael D. Werber; Barbara Thornburg
- In memory of Jana West; Sidney and Jayne Rice
- In memory of Norma Jean Wilcox; Charles Wilcox
- In memory of Mike Wilson; John and Sally Iwata
- In memory of Frank, Betty and Roz Wright; Terry and Cindy Wright

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PET OF THE WEEK

Gigi is a sweet 3-year-old cat who has been at the shelter for almost a year. She gets along well with other cats and is friendly with people. Gigi is spayed. We recommend that all cats live inside only.

You can meet Gigi at the Humane Society of Ventura County in Ojai. Her \$120 adoption fee includes spay, vaccinations, free veterinarian check, feline leukemia test, microchip implantation, ID tag and a great friend.

The shelter is open Monday - Saturday, 10-6. We also have a low-cost spay/neuter clinic. Many Chihuahuas and Chihuahua mixes can be altered at no cost.



Humane Society of Ventura County Animal Shelter: 402 Bryant Street • 646-6505