

HUASNA VALLEY ASSOCIATION
WORKING TO PRESERVE THE RURAL / AGRICULTURAL
SETTING OF THE HUASNA VALLEY
www.HuasnaValley.org

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Oil "Seep" Found to be Leaking Oil Well in Huasna Valley
Huasna Residents concerned about potential groundwater pollution

Huasna Valley, CA — May 17, 2010. The Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) returned to the Huasna Valley today to begin cleanup of an oil seep from an oil well that had been plugged and abandoned in 1958, but has been leaking for years. This cleanup comes on the heels of DOGGR's three-month effort to plug and abandon six other old oil wells, which were deserted in 1985.

The site of the deserted and leaking oil wells on the Mankins Ranch has hosted several failed attempts during the 1930's, 1960's and 1980's to extract thick, tar-like oil from the hills surrounding the Huasna Valley. The last operator deserted the site in 1985 without plugging the existing wells or cleaning up equipment, tanks, pipelines, and hydrocarbon-contaminated soils. The Mankins Ranch site is currently the target of yet another attempt to produce oil, this time by Excelaron, LLC, who is currently preparing an environmental Impact Report for their proposed project.

An inspection in 2002 by DOGGR showed evidence of well casings open to the atmosphere and a pool of sulfur-smelling tar and water, but nothing was done to clean up the site until a number of Huasna Valley residents complained to the county last year. "This is yet another example of the lack of responsible regulation of the oil industry that has haunted the US for generations. Isn't it about time for a change?" questioned Ron Skinner, HVA coordinator. In June, 2009, DOGGR issued an order to plug and abandon the existing wells, 24 years after they were deserted.

Huasna residents have expressed concern that documented rusted well casings, wells open to the atmosphere for 24 years, hydrocarbon contaminated soils, and a surface pool of oil and water from this leaking well and potentially others may have polluted the community's groundwater. "The Huasna aquifer is already fragile. The 400+ residents in the Huasna Area can't drink oil and we can't use polluted groundwater to irrigate our crops and earn our livelihood from agriculture," said Huasna farmer and HVA coordinator Ron Skinner.

For more information contact: www.HuasnaValley.org or Ron Skinner, Coordinator (805) 473-3827.

DOGGR: Pat Abel, DOGGR Santa Maria office (805) 937-7246 or Don Drysdale, Dept. of Conservation Public Affairs (916) 323-1886. (Well file #079-00675 has photos of the seep taken on 10/19/02).

Oil Seep: <http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning/environmental/EnvironmentalNotices/excelaron/09-24-09Submittal.htm> (Especially file "Huasna Field ESA 9-23-09.pdf" which includes photos of the site).

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