11/13/14

Re: Phillips 66 Refinery

I am opposed to the rail spur project that would bring crude oil to the Nipomo Mesa by ~~truck~~ Trains

I have lived on the Mesa for over 50 years. the area gets air pollution from ~~veho~~ vehicles on the dunes — we do not need more potential problems that the trains would add.

No oil trains at the Phillips 66 Refinery

DEW-01

William Denneen

William Denneen
1040 Cielo Ln
Nipomo, CA 93444-9039

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PLANNING & BUILDING

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Let

Clear dust on the Mesa

To the Editor:

Elected officials have an obligation to keep the dust rule in place to protect the air we breathe on the Nipomo Mesa.

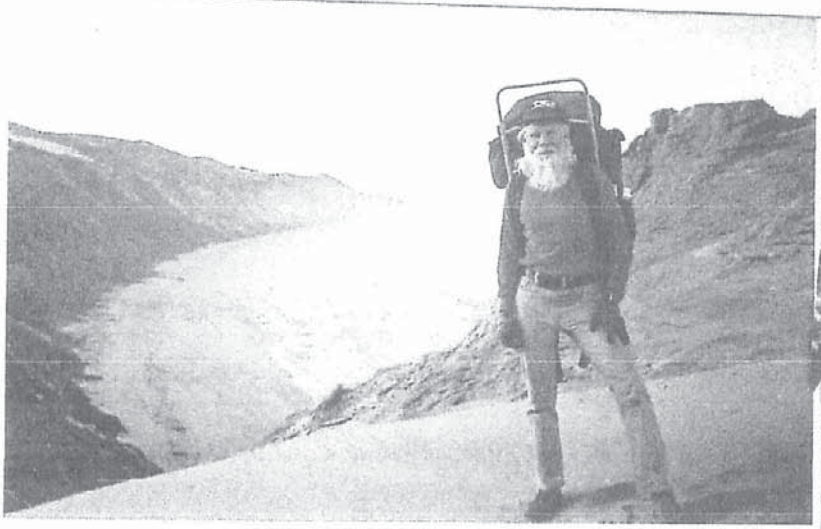
I have lived here for more than 50 years and have, like many on the Mesa, terrible lung congestion. I wear a gas mask on bad days.

Why does Grover Beach Mayor Debbie Peterson want to permit this air pollution to continue while her council members disagree with her. The county Air Pollution Control District has a legal and moral obligation to protect the air we breathe on the Mesa.

Bill Denneen
Nipomo

Tufts MAGAZINE

Send correspondence to Tufts Magazine, Tufts Publications, 80 George Street, Medford, MA 02155, or email tuftsmagazine@tufts.edu.



BILL DENNEEN, A50, G51

BS MA

HOME: Nipomo, California

CURRENT PURSUITS: Environmental provocateur and frequent contributor of opinion pieces to local papers; grantor of the Bill Denneen Environmental Award, which recognizes "significant environmental contributions on California's Central Coast"; off-grid farmer and cordial host of Bill's Farm Hostel

FORMER EMPLOYMENT: Biology teacher at Hancock College in Santa Maria, California, and high schools in Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Florida, and California, as well as Germany; ranger naturalist at Sequoia National Park

GROWING HIS OWN SINCE: 1960, when he first took up residence on his one-acre lot in Nipomo. "I started a garden like I had as a kid and got some chickens so I could have fresh eggs." He went on to raise goats for milk, pigs for meat, and horses for riding.

THINKS GLOBALLY ABOUT: Overconsumption. "Resources are being depleted as corporations push us to buy, buy, buy."

ACTS LOCALLY TO: Safeguard the ecosystem of Nipomo Dunes and nearby Oceano Beach by keeping vehicles off them; force the shutdown of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. "I have been asked what could replace Diablo. My answer: the sun. I see houses 'growing' all over Nipomo with the sun shining on the roofs and no mechanism to utilize this energy source. All roofs need solar panels and photovoltaics like mine has."

DEFINING TRAITS: Outspokenness, independence, reverence for nature. And a wholehearted acceptance of his status as an elder.

FEELS THE PULL OF: "His" tree at Nipomo Native Garden, "a natural area that was once proposed for more houses. I led the fight to protect it, and my community designated the largest, most twisted, oldest oak with a plaque that reads 'The Bill Denneen coast live oak.' The plaque features a quote from Henry David Thoreau as well: 'I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately.' I hug my tree almost daily. My ashes will go there."

HIS EDUCATION: B.S. (biology), M.A. (sociology), Tufts; M.S. (biology), University of New Mexico

What of the waste?

California has one functioning nuclear power plant: Diablo Canyon. It stores its toxic, deadly radioactive nuclear waste on site. Is this our legacy to future generations? I was arrested in front of Diablo Canyon in 1978 and went to jail because they did not know what they would do with their waste.

I suggest either close Diablo Canyon or, better, put the CEOs that store this terrible material on site in jail, as I was.

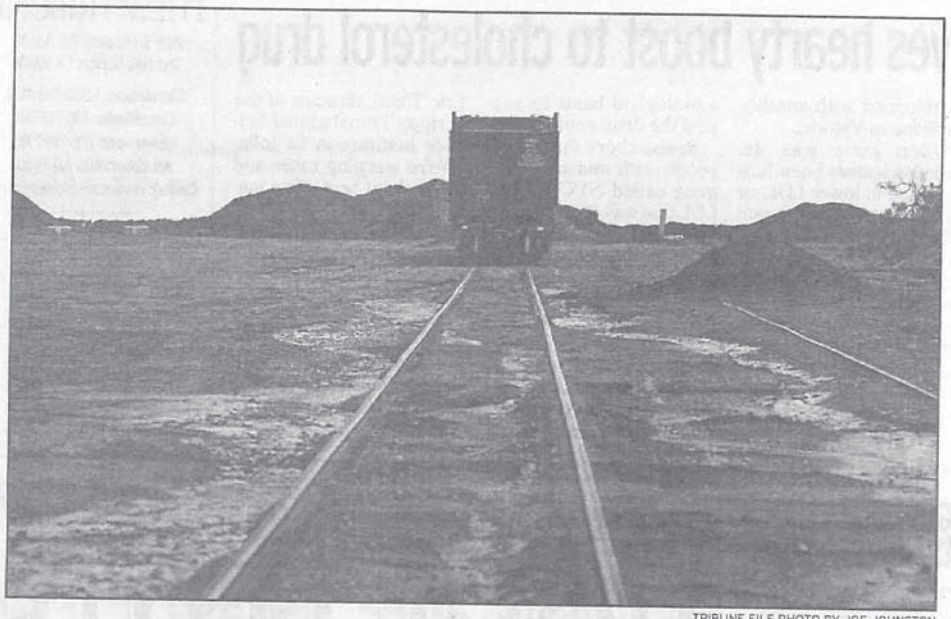
Bill Denneen
Nipomo.

Don't bless us in public

I am not a Christian. My "god" is Mother Nature. I am intimidated, offended, disenfranchised by Christian blessings. Our country was founded on freedom from religion. I suggest *no* blessings before meetings ("Pay to pray?" Nov. 7). Honoring Mother Nature would be acceptable to me.

Bill Denneen
Nipomo

NT 10/21/13

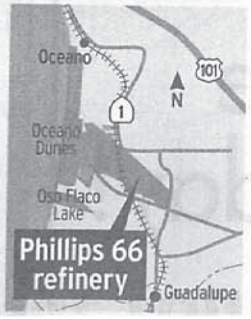


TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO BY JOE JOHNSTON

The end of the current stretch of rail line inside the Phillips 66 refinery on the Nipomo Mesa. Phillips 66 hopes to expand the line to receive crude by train, instead of by pipeline.

Group rallies against rail

Mesa Refinery Watch Group gathers opposition to rail spur project that would bring crude oil to Nipomo Mesa by train



By Cynthia Lambert
clambert@thetribunenews.com

As more than 200 people settled into their seats in a Nipomo conference room Wednesday, a video of a crude oil train rolling through Auburn, Wash., started playing on a large screen.

For nearly two minutes, the crowd watched as one black railcar after another noisily passed by.

Members of the Mesa Refinery Watch Group had organized the meeting to curry opposition to a plan by Phillips 66 to install tracks so it can deliver crude oil to its Nipomo refinery by rail. The plant now receives crude by pipeline.

One by one, group members took turns detailing significant and potentially disastrous impacts that they

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Refinery

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believe the proposal could have on San Luis Obispo County.

"Approving this project would change the very fabric of our county," Martin Akel said. "My friends, protect yourself. Take action and take it now."

Oil company Phillips 66 has proposed adding 1.3 miles of track to an existing rail spur, including five parallel tracks, an unloading facility and on-site pipelines for trains to deliver crude oil to its Nipomo refinery for processing.

Phillips 66 anticipates unloading up to five trains a week with about 80 tank cars each, with a maximum of about 250 trains arriving each year.

Crude oil would be transferred from the new unloading facility to existing storage tanks via a new on-site, above-ground pipeline. Each train is expected to be at the refinery between 10 and 12 hours.

No crude oil or refined product would be transported out of the refinery by rail.

With comments due Nov. 24 on a revised environmental impact report (EIR) for the project and a San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission meeting set for Jan. 29, Mesa Refinery Watch Group members are trying to drum up as much public opposition to the project as possible.

No county planning officials or Phillips 66 representatives spoke during the presentations. A Phillips 66 spokesman said Wednesday that the company plans to submit comments on the revised EIR.

Wednesday's gathering at Trilogy at Monarch Dunes was advertised as a citizens' action meeting for people to learn how they can help "derail the rail project."

And judging by the large crowd and enthusiastic response for the speakers, many attendees agreed with concerns about possible air quality, noise and odor impacts, as well as the potential for rail accidents that could cause oil spills, fires or explosions — not just in Nipomo, but anywhere along the Union Pacific mainline.

"How can anyone be in favor of this?" said Janet Pelkey, who came to the meeting with her husband, Jim, to learn more about the project.

GET INVOLVED

Written comments on the revised environmental impact report should be submitted by 4:30 p.m. Nov. 24 to Murry Wilson at the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building, 976 Osos St., Room 200, San Luis Obispo, CA 93408, or emailed to p66-railspur-comments@co.slo.ca.us.

More information is at www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning.htm.

Changing times

Opponents believe that Phillips 66 is trying to dramatically transform its business model locally by creating a new, high-intensity operation to generate higher profits by bringing in lower-cost crude oil for processing.

"We have nothing against higher profits except when they cost us our way of life," Akel said.

But Phillips 66 officials maintain oil production in California is dropping, and bringing in crude oil by rail from a wider range of sources would allow them to offset any reduction in deliveries from its current suppliers.

"Phillips 66 is working to ensure the long-term viability of the Santa Maria Refinery and the many jobs it provides," company spokesman Dennis Nuss wrote in an email Wednesday. "Protecting our people, our environment, and our communities guides everything we do and those values will be applied to this project as well."

Phillips 66 is now looking for alternate sources outside California for reliable supplies of competitively priced crude oil, he wrote.

"However, there are no pipelines that connect the refinery to these alternate sources of crude oil and the refinery does not have a marine offloading facility," Nuss added. "The solution is to utilize and enhance our existing rail facility to enable rail delivery of crude oil."

Nuss said the process used to refine the crude oil will not change, nor will the project generate an increase in production.

Opponents said the oil-by-rail proposal would bring a more intense activity to the refinery than the "benign activity of delivery of crude by pipeline," group member Tom Ryan said.

"In its place it (Phillips 66) would put intense operations that increase the health risks to citizens along with noise, light, visual and other outcomes," Ryan said.

Opponents said that diesel exhaust fumes from the locomotives would exacerbate air quality issues on the Nipomo Mesa, which violates state standards an average of 65 days per year because of high particulate levels.

Environmental risk

One of the main points of the opponents' presentation Tuesday centered on safety and the risk of an oil spill, explosion or derailment that could damage county residents' quality of life.

Currently, no more than six freight trains and six passenger trains pass through San Luis Obispo County each day on the Union Pacific's Coast line.

Freight trains already carry crude oil as well as lumber, vehicles and hazardous materials, according to the environmental report.

A crude oil train traverses the county as it moves from San Ardo to Los Angeles two to three times a week. It has been in operation about 20 years.

But, Mesa Refinery Watch Group member John Anderson said, "More trains equal more risk."

Trains could enter California at five locations and, depending on the route, would arrive at the Phillips 66 refinery either from the north or from the south, according to the revised environmental impact report.

Trains coming from Northern California would generally pass through the Union Pacific rail yard in Roseville, near Sacramento; while trains traveling from Southern California would likely pass through the Colton rail yard in San Bernardino County.

A hazards analysis estimated the average incident rate of a release of 100 gallons or more of oil from a train traveling between the Phillips 66 refinery and rail yards in Roseville or Colton would be once every 46 to 76 years, depending on the route.

The probability of an oil release anywhere along the rail line in California would be greater — estimated at once every 19 to 31 years.

Project opponents urged residents to pressure county planning commissioners to adopt a "no project" alternative, where crude oil shipments would continue to be delivered to the refinery by pipeline.

The South County Advisory Council, which advises county planners and supervisors on projects, recently discussed the project as well and sent comments to county officials.

"This project provides more disadvantages to the community in terms of adverse health issues than advantages ... such as added jobs," Richard Wright, the public safety representative on the council, wrote in his comments.

Reach Cynthia Lambert at 781-7929. Stay updated by following @SouthCountyBeat on Twitter.