

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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May 25, 1999

TO: Coastal Commissioners and Interested Parties

FROM: Susan M. Hansch, Deputy Director
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SUBJECT: Unocal Avila Beach Remediation Status Report

Staff Note: In a report dated April 22, 1999, (prepared for the May, 1999, Commission meeting), Coastal Commission staff provided a brief history of the Unocal Avila Beach oil spill; past Coastal Commission involvement, including permits issued for spill characterization, containment or remediation; current ongoing remediation activities; and future remediation activities and permitting requirements. This status report provides updates on the most recent activities. A slide presentation is planned for the June Commission meeting.

BACKGROUND HISTORY

Project Location. The community of Avila Beach is located on the coastline of San Luis Bay between the cities of Morro Bay and Pismo Beach, approximately eight miles west of State Highway 101. The town is bordered to the south by the Pacific Ocean, to the east by the Unocal Avila Tank Farm facility and the coastal bluffs at Fossil Point, and to the north and west by the San Luis Creek and Estuary. Further west lie the Unocal Pier and Port San Luis.

History of Unocal Operations. Petroleum hydrocarbon storage and transfer activities were conducted in the Avila Beach area from the early 1900's until 1997. Gasoline, diesel, gas oil (a semi-refined product similar to diesel) and crude oil were pumped between Unocal's bluff top tank farm and the Unocal Pier through a network of underground pipelines that run beneath Front Street and Avila Beach Drive. Unocal discontinued the tank farm and terminal operations in 1997.

Discovery of Contamination. In 1989, petroleum hydrocarbon contamination in soil and groundwater was discovered during a routine geotechnical survey for a commercial building

permit. The attached "Current Hydrocarbon Soil Plume Map" shows the extent of the known gasoline-, diesel-, and crude oil-grade hydrocarbons underlying the town (particularly along and in the vicinity of Front Street), beach areas, and intertidal areas.

Cleanup Order. In April, 1998, the Regional Water Quality Control Board ("RWQCB") ordered Unocal to excavate much of the contamination. The order requires Unocal to commence and complete remediation by December 1, 1998, and December 1, 2000, respectively.

Unocal's Three-Celled Cleanup Approach. Unocal intends to remediate in three phases: Cell 1, the west town, October, 1998 – May, 1999; Cell 2, beach, April, 1999 – October, 1999; Cell 3, east town, October, 1999 – May, 2000.

Coastal Commission and Staff Involvement. Since 1992, the Coastal Commission and its staff have been actively involved in oil spill assessment and remediation activities at Avila Beach. The Commission and its staff also worked very closely with San Luis Obispo County to finalize County permit conditions covering the area within the appeal jurisdiction. The process was an innovative and unusual approach that allowed the Commission to withdraw its appeal and to keep the project on a RWQCB-ordered time schedule. On September 8, 1998, the Coastal Commission granted CDP No. E-98-13 to Unocal to conduct the beach portion of the cleanup. The Commission staff is also involved in developing the Avila Beach Specific Plan, to address reconstruction of the town. The staff provides monthly updates to the Commission on the status of the remediation and specific planning process.

ONGOING SITE ACTIVITIES, MAY 1999

To summarize major cleanup activities at Avila this past month:

Town Areas:

- Unocal has completed backfill of Cell 1A (the westernmost subcell); and
- Continues to excavate contaminated soil in Cell 1B.

Beach Areas:

- Cleanup on the beach has started. Unocal has completed driving sheet pile in Cell 2A, and will start excavating the clean overburden this week;
- Unocal has also started removing portions of Avila Pier by hand to clear the area for work in Cell 2B; and
- Moved the Yacht Club building to its temporary location in Wild Cherry Canyon.

Although the project is proceeding fairly smoothly, some problems have occurred:

- There was slight delay in completing Cell 2A sheet pile due to problems encountered with old sheet pile that was left had been left in place since the west end excavation of Winter, 1995. A survey error apparently caused the new sheet pile to cross over the old.
- Another truckload of contaminated soil spilled along Front Street. As with the last spill, the truck tailgate opened as the truck started moving up the hill on Front Street. Jacobs Engineering notified the Avila Beach Fire Department and immediately cleaned up the spill.
- Simultaneous excavation and sheet pile driving elevate noise and vibration levels. Noise levels are relatively high in all areas with a line of sight view of sheet pile activities. Vibration propagation is higher in areas with harder subsurface soils, such as Cell 1B. Cell 1A comprised sandier soils in which propagation is relatively poor. Cell 1B is also closer to businesses and residences. Some reports of building damage (cracks) have been reported. Similar effects are anticipated during sheet pile driving in Cells 2C and 3.

With respect to the Specific Planning Process:

- A draft plan has been developed thus far. Issues that have been at the forefront of recent meetings include proposed traffic and circulation changes, and re-establishment of the Yacht Club.
- An EIR for the draft plan is now being prepared, and is expected to be released on May 29. The Plan will then be submitted for County and Coastal Commission review and approval. The Plan will be presented to the Planning Commission on August 12. Staff estimates that Commission review, in the form of an LCP amendment, will take place this year in the early fall.

Project Avila Update

Beach Closed for Summer on April 19

For several weeks now, folks who wanted to get to the beach during project hours have had to use the access point at First Street and Avila Beach Drive.

This continued until April 19, when we closed the beach for the summer. The beach must be closed because work being conducted there will make it unsafe for public access.

Structures on the beach and around the pier will be demolished in the next few

weeks, and sheetpile installation is expected to begin on the beach in the third week of April.

Work on the beach is expected to be completed by the end of summer. When work is done, the beach will be returned to public use and no longer be part of the project.

Olde Port Beach is the closest alternative beach. It is located about 1 mile west of San Miguel Street on Avila Beach Drive.



Avila Beach will close April 19.

Parking is available on Avila Beach Drive and at Port San Luis.

Bill's Avila Notepad



We are pleased to announce we have reached another milestone for Project Avila. Excavation of affected soil in the Cell 1A area has been completed.

To complete Cell 1A construction, we must finish backfilling the area with clean soil, grade the soil, and pull out the sheetpile that surrounds Cell 1A.

Construction in Cell 1B will follow the same steps as Cell 1A. Crews will install sheetpile, excavate overburden, excavate affected soil, backfill with clean soil, and remove sheetpile.

Hauling activities are continuing at the tank farm. High winds caused damage to the canopy covering the affected soil stockpile area.

The sides of the canopy are still intact, so the area continues to be protected from wind. While the roof is now open, we have drainage systems in place to control

or handle water run-off if it rains.

Wind also caused some damage to the project area fence, but this caused only a short delay while crews took action to minimize the damage.

The primary action taken was to cut the tarps off of the project fence to let the wind pass through more easily.

Countdown to Completion
13 Months

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Project Avila Hotline: 877-Unocal-7 Visit our website: www.projectavila.com

<p>What to Expect (Next Two Weeks of the Project)</p> <p>Order may be present around the project area when excavation of affect soil is conducted. Construction work and sheptic installation may produce noise in the downtown area.</p>	<p>Open & Closed</p> <p>ROADS: Front Street and San Miguel Street near downtown are one-way only. Carr Landing Road will have controlled two-way traffic during trucking activities.</p> <p>BEACH: The beach is CLOSED. The nearest alternative beach is Old Port Beach. It is located about 1 mile west of San Miguel Street on Avila Beach Drive.</p> <p>BUSINESS: The Custom Home, Avila Grocery, Sea Farm, the Inn at Avila Beach, Beachcomber Inn, Avila Resort and all Port Food Falls Businesses are OPEN.</p>
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In the Coming Weeks...

<p>Excavation of overburden in the Cell 1B area is already under way. Installation of sheptic is expected to begin on the west end of the beach near the first of May. Sheptic installation is expected to continue on a regular basis. In different project areas, until the middle of summer.</p>	<p>Crews will continue backfilling the Cell 1A area with clean soil. Backfilling should be completed by the first week of May. The soil will then be graded. Construction activities are now being focused on Cell 1B. Sheptic installation in this area is on schedule, and it should be completed by the week of April 26.</p>
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Project Avila Update

March 12, 1999

Volume 8

Excavation Under Way in Cell 1A

Excavation of soil from the Cell 1A project area has begun and it is progressing on schedule.

Workers have been removing clean top-soil (overburden) on the west end of the cell.

Initially, the clean overburden removed from the area was being stockpiled at the Avila Tank Farm only.

Now, however, stockpiling of soil is planned to take place in and around the project area as well.

This potential change will save

hundreds of truck trips up Front Street, and reduce the noise and air emissions associated with the truck hauling.

Removal of affected soil began this week. It is being transported up Front Street to the tank farm.

As more affected soil is removed, odors may be noticeable near the project area.



An excavator loads soil in a dump truck

Cell 1A work should be complete sometime near the end of April.

Arrie's Project Notepad



Arrie Bachrach is the Project Ombudsman for Project Avila. His primary responsibility is answering questions and addressing concerns about the project.

Site Health and Safety

Jacobs has prepared a health and safety plan to protect personnel and members of the community during the project. The Avila Fire Department has reviewed and approved the plan.

Safety professionals are on site to ensure every employee follows the plan.

The plan addresses potential hazards related to chemicals, fire, and physical hazards like working in the excavation area.

The plan also covers roles and responsibilities of different personnel, notification procedures, and how Jacobs, Unocal, and public agencies would work together in the unlikely event of an emergency.

A key element of our safety program is to prepare a Safe Plan of Action for each

major project task before it begins.

We break the tasks down into individual steps and complete a hazard analysis for each step.

The Project Health and Safety program is coordinated with the Community Monitoring Program. If the monitors detect elevated levels of chemicals in the community, Jacobs would be notified so the appropriate actions could be taken at the construction site.

Countdown to Completion
14 Months

Project Avila Notice

March 12, 1999

Truck Traffic Update

- In the next few weeks, increased truck traffic is likely to occur in and out of Avila Beach.
- As a result, some minimal traffic delays may occur.
- Cave Landing Road will be under two-way traffic control during trucking operations.
- If you have any questions, please contact the Project Avila hotline at (877)Unocal-7.

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www.projectavila.com