



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND POPULATION HEALTH TASK FORCE

## COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND POPULATION HEALTH TASK FORCE

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## TASK FORCE CO-CHAIRS

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November 22, 2019

Timothy Stapleton, AICP  
Land Use Regulation Division  
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning  
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### **Re: Baldwin Hills Community Standards District Periodic Review II Draft Report**

Dear Mr. Stapleton,

As members of the Los Angeles County Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force (Task Force), we write to express our collective concerns and recommendations regarding the 2019 Baldwin Hills Community Standards District (CSD) Periodic Review II Draft Report. The Task Force has identified the protection of public health near neighborhood oil and gas production sites as a priority and urges the County Department of Regional Planning (DRP) to revise and integrate values of equity and public health in this updated draft of the Periodic Review.

It is the Task Force's considered view that certain recommendations in the Draft Report are not grounded in the growing body of peer-reviewed academic research cited in both this report and the Department of Public Health's 2018 health report in which health impacts were identified well beyond a half-mile radius from sensitive land uses. As a public health and equity-oriented commission, we strongly recommend that the CSD Review ultimately consider recommendations that prioritize public health, equity, and the Precautionary Principle.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For your convenience, we use the term Precautionary Principle to mean: "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof. The process of applying the precautionary principle must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must also involve an examination of the full range of alternatives, including no action." define at Wingspread, headquarters of the Johnson Foundation in Racine, Wisconsin, January 15, 1998.

#### **Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force Members:**

Sonya Young Adam · Manal Aboelata · Mayra Alvarez · Tamika Butler · Melinda Cordero-Bárzaga · Veronica Flores  
Michelle Fluke · Cathy Friedman · Nancy Halpern Ibrahim · Anisha Hingorani · Anne-Marie Jones · Nomsa Khalfani  
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## **Task Force Recommendations**

### **1. The CSD should ensure comprehensive, timely, and meaningful communication that informs adjacent and impacted community members about oil drilling operations at the Inglewood Oil Field.**

Although well drilling may not have occurred at the oil field since the last Periodic Review, other activities that require a South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) 1148.2 Notification Report<sup>2</sup> should be reported to the public in an accessible way, such as through the Community Alert Notification (CAN) System or during the monthly CAP meetings. This includes maintenance acidization, gravel packing, and other high intensity operations. Impacted community members have expressed that the current alert system provides messages that are confusing, and that is inconsistent in providing meaningful notification. Many have cited that following the spill that occurred earlier in 2019, no system alert was issued through CAN.

In addition to revising the CAN system, complaint logs should be made public and readily available with multiple ways of providing input – for example, verbally or in writing to DRP at a CAP meeting, verbally by calling DRP or leaving a voicemail, in writing via regular mail to DRP, or electronically to DRP via email, text, and/or through an app. Impacted community members have also suggested updating the website and making it accessible in other relevant languages. In 2018, the Task Force developed and adopted Principles of Equity, a document of guiding principles that describe elements essential for improving population health and promoting healthy, equitable communities.<sup>3</sup> It is imperative that all County departments understand and implement strategies and investments that integrate the Principles of Equity. Based on the testimony and response comments made in this Periodic Review, there is an inadequate level of inclusion and data accessibility provided to impacted communities. Investing in meaningful communication and data sharing will also build more accountability.

### **2. The Task Force strongly supports the prioritization of a more protective human health and safety setback as a critical policy solution to urban oil drilling’s negative impacts on human health.**

Policies that implement a buffer or setback have been an effective public health policy solution to limit the exposure of toxic air pollutants and other contaminants and reduce the risk of adverse health impacts. Considering that health impacts associated with oil and gas development impacts residents living one half to three miles away and that the majority of the most impacted residents are already environmentally vulnerable, low-income, communities of color, the Task Force recognizes the vital need for a health protective setback or buffer policy, based on the Precautionary Principle, to reduce exposure to harmful pollutants for those who are already cumulatively burdened by multiple socioeconomic and environmental challenges.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> SCAQMD. Rule 1148.2. <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/rule-book/reg-xi/rule-1148-2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> 2018. Los Angeles County Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force. Principles of Equity. Accessed on November 20, 2019 at [https://www.thinkhealthla.org/content/sites/losangeles/Actions/Principles\\_of\\_Equity\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.thinkhealthla.org/content/sites/losangeles/Actions/Principles_of_Equity_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> As of 2014, approximately 5.4 million Californians lived within a mile of one, or more, of more than 84,000 existing oil and gas wells, more than a third of whom also lived in areas most burdened by environmental pollution as identified by California EPA’s environmental justice screening tool, CalEnviroScreen. These communities, highly vulnerable to additional pollution from oil and gas development, consist primarily of Latinos/Hispanics (69%), African Americans (10%), and Asian Americans (11%). NRDC, [Drilling in California: Who’s At Risk?](#), p. 4 (Oct. 2014).

The County Department of Public Health's 2018 health report identified that there are health impacts associated with oil and gas operations beyond a half-mile radius from sensitive land uses. Consequently, the report recommends that the County increase the current setback of 300 feet for wells in unincorporated Los Angeles County outside of the Inglewood field. Given the growing body of scientific evidence, it is our recommendation that the CSD should also increase its current setback of 400 feet to a more protective distance and enforce the sunsetting of wells that currently lie within the 400 foot buffer.

**3. The CSD should include a plan for the sunsetting of oil operations in unincorporated Los Angeles County, similar to Culver City, and promoting a just and equitable transition to a cleaner economy.**

Through the Countywide Sustainability Plan (OurCounty), the County has committed to “[c]ollaborate with the City of Los Angeles and other cities to develop a sunset strategy for all oil and gas operations that prioritizes disproportionately affected communities” (OurCounty, Action 84), and the Department of Regional Planning is specifically identified as a key partner in this effort. Furthermore, it is the view of the Task Force that no serious effort at developing such a strategy can move forward without including the Inglewood Oil Field, where more than three-fourths of the County's wells are located.

**Additional Concerns**

**Inaccurate and/or misleading responses to scoping comments.**

Certain responses to comments received during the scoping period appear to be inaccurate and/or misleading. First, the County's consultant, MRS Environmental, dismissed several comments as falling “outside the scope” of the Periodic Review. However, according to the relevant provisions in the CSD, the only guidelines as to scope are that the Periodic Review is to “consider whether additional provisions should be added, appended, or removed” (Los Angeles County Code § 22.310.070.G). To that end, we ask that the County re-examine the following issue areas and evaluate and analyze them as part of this Periodic Review where appropriate:

- Setbacks
- Wildlife and parks
- Evacuation plans
- Climate change and sea level rise
- Sunsetting of operations

Second, MRS Environmental cited “legal issues” as a reason to not analyze certain issues as part of this Periodic Review. However, the CSD itself states that the Periodic Review must “review and consider enforcement activity, operational records, and any other issues relating to oil operations” (Los Angeles County Code § 22.310.070.G.1), which would seem to cover even those issues that might require some legal analysis or have legal ramifications. In that regard, it's our view that this Periodic Review should include important issues like setbacks and a potential moratorium on and/or eventual sunsetting of operations, with relevant agencies consulting with County Counsel, as appropriate.

Third, some of MRS Environmental's characterizations of fact do not ring true based on feedback this Task Force has received from community members. It is not accurate to say that “[t]he County has not received any complaints or issues from the existing setback distances” for the Inglewood field. To the

contrary, in our discussions around upcoming updates to County's oil and gas ordinance and the Department of Public Health's Community Health Improvement Plan, for example, this Task Force heard numerous complaints from County residents and stakeholders regarding the inadequacy of existing setback distances.

**Chemicals of concern that pose a risk to nearby residents**

According to the submitted SCAQMD 1148.2 reports<sup>5</sup> for the Inglewood Oil Field, nearly 33,300 pounds (2.4 million gallons) of hydrochloric acid (CAS #7647-01-0) have been used at the field, while so far in 2019 (as of October 9, 2019) there have been 37 maintenance acidization events that have used 144,800 pounds (10.5 million gallons) of hydrochloric acid (CAS #7647-01-0) and 411 pounds (56,000 gallons) of hydrofluoric acid (CAS #7664-39-3). Hydrofluoric acid is a dangerous Proposition 65 air toxin, and both substances are highly corrosive and toxic to human life. Many more toxic chemicals, such as ethylbenzene, xylene, toluene, 2-butoxy-ethanol, di-nonyl-phenyl poly-oxy-ethylene, which are carcinogens and endocrine disrupting chemicals are also reported in the 1148.2 chemical reports. Because of the extreme health risks involved in the use of these dangerous chemicals at the Inglewood field, any and all reports regarding the use of such substances should be disclosed immediately and made readily available at regular CAP meetings.

The Task Force is also concerned about the use of odor suppressants referenced in section 4.2.B.3. (page 21). Community advocates have long identified that many of the industrial-grade odor suppressants used in oil and gas operations contain toxic chemicals, such as nonylphenol ethoxylate, an endocrine disrupting chemical.<sup>6</sup> It is the Task Force's strong recommendation that any odor suppressants used must also be documented and disclosed, and those reports must be made readily available at regular CAP meetings.

**In conclusion, the Task Force strongly supports and emphasizes the prioritization of a human health and safety setback as a critical policy solution to urban oil drilling's negative impact on human health.** Many of the recommendations made in the CSD Review rely on mitigation but relying solely on mitigation and more regulation are not adequate solutions for a fundamentally incompatible land use to sensitive land uses. We believe there are many opportunities for DRP, through the CSD Review, to implement strategies and investments that integrate Principles of Equity. Thank you for considering our views.

Respectfully,



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Task Force Co-Chair



Nomsa Khalfani, PhD, MFT  
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Members:

- Sonya Young Adam, California Black Women's Health Project
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<sup>5</sup> South Coast AQMD. Rule 1148.2 Oil and Gas Wells Activity Notification. Chemical Report Search. Facility ID: 184301 <http://xappprod.aqmd.gov/r1148pubaccessportal/Home/Index>.

<sup>6</sup> 2016. Earthjustice. Petition for Abatement of Public Nuisance, Address: 1349-1375 Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90007, pp. 7-8. Accessed November 20, 2019 at <https://is.gd/FjvDCE>.

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