



Tar Creek Oil Spill Update **February 2, 3 p.m.**

What: An oil spill within the Los Padres National Forest boundary has occurred in Tar Creek near the Sespe Condor Sanctuary and Sespe Wilderness in northern Ventura County. The final spill amount is five barrels (42 gallons each) of oil and 50 barrels of groundwater.

Who: Vintage Production California LLC, the facility operator, reported the break in a 2-7/8 inch waste water line the afternoon of January 30 after a routine inspection. The pipe break apparently was due to expansion and contraction in the recent cold weather.

Federal and state agencies including the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources and California Department of Fish and Game are monitoring the company's cleanup operations.

Where: The spill area is located in a developed oil field area northwest of Hopper Mountain. The area includes both federal and private land within the forest boundary.

Background: Based on additional surveys, the oil is estimated to have moved 3 miles down Tar Creek from the spill point of origin. That is about 3 miles upstream of the confluence of Tar Creek and Sespe Creek where condors are known to drink. A boom has been placed on Tar Creek, one mile upstream from Sespe Creek, to capture any oil that gets past the last weir dam. The spill has not impacted threatened or endangered species. State Department of Fish and Game staff have walked the length of Tar Creek. Aside from insects, no oiled wildlife has been observed or reported.

Water from the Tar Creek Tank Battery, located on private land, is pumped through the waste water line to the Hansen-White Star Produced Water Plant on federal property. When the leak developed in the waste water line, water and then oil floating on the water drained from the water tank, resulting in the spill.

The oil is a light grade, similar in consistency to motor oil. The groundwater contains naturally dissolved minerals, but the oil is the environmental concern. While Tar Creek does have naturally occurring "tar seeps" in its waterway, and the spill was caught early and is relatively small, the incident is significant given the importance of the Sespe Condor Sanctuary in recovery of the endangered California condor.

Status: Cleanup crews using earthen berms, vacuum trucks, absorbent pads and flotation devices have made good progress in removing and containing the oil. The pads are taken to a disposal facility in Buttonwillow where they are disposed of as shop rags. About 40 workers of Advanced Cleanup Technologies Inc. under contract to Vintage are working on the cleanup. Full cleanup is expected to take about another week. Vintage will replace the broken line. They will examine all waste water lines in the field to see if they need to be replaced and/or rerouted and will increase monitoring of the waste water tanks.

Vintage and the agencies will meet following cleanup to determine what procedures and corrective actions need to be taken to avoid a similar incident.

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