



## **Tar Creek Oil Spill Update** **February 7, 12 p.m.**

**What:** An oil spill on private land 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. State Fish and Game is the state incident commander.

**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:** 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, but oiled insects, frogs, a snake and a songbird have been found.

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. All large pools of oil have been removed. Workers are collecting oil from the smaller pockets and have started pressure washing rocks and vegetation using hot water (no cleaning agents). Cleanup firms under contract to Vintage have 83 workers cleaning up the spill. There is a 20 percent chance of rain today and contingency plans are being prepared to keep the oil from moving downstream in the case of rain. Vintage replaced a large section of the pipeline after the spill and is evaluating the entire line for possible replacement. 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. The state Department of Conservation has notified Vintage the line must successfully pass a hydrostatic test before being placed back in service.

### **Second Leak Detected**

Vintage last night found a second leak in the same pipeline above and in close proximity to the first leak. The second leak, which they believe occurred yesterday, resulted in a spill of approximately 20 gallons of medium weight oil mixed with approximately 80 gallons of groundwater. The spill occurred on private land in a dry tributary of Tar Creek. The oil and water traveled about 75 feet and did not reach Tar Creek or national forest land. The line has been clamped at the leak site. Crews hope to complete clean up of the second spill sometime today.

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

Contacts: The next update will be issued when the cleanup is completed or if conditions change. For further information, contact:

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