

# **AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GREATER WHITTIER COMMUNITY ABOUT OIL DRILLING IN THE WHITTIER HILLS**

**Dear Neighbor,**

**As many of you know, the Whittier City Council is planning to bring oil drilling back to the Whittier Hills. On October 28, 2008, the City of Whittier awarded a lease to Matrix Oil Company of Santa Barbara for a potentially massive oil drilling project in the Whittier hills. The project, as currently configured, could have significant adverse environmental, economic, and quality of life impacts affecting residents of the cities of Whittier, La Habra, La Habra Heights, Hacienda Heights, La Mirada, and unincorporated portions of LA County adjacent to the proposed sites.**

**This project is planned for portions of the Whittier Hills that were bought by the city from LA County with Proposition A funds, specifically earmarked to preserve and protect open space and the natural wildlife habitat. Contradicting this mandate, this project at present includes drilling up to 60 wells on three sites in the project area, as well as building an oil processing facility, gas plant, storage tanks, a truck loading facility, and a 2.8 mile oil and natural gas pipeline going through the heart of the city along Colima and Lambert Roads to the intersection of Leffingwell Road and La Mirada Boulevard.**

**The proposed wells would utilize slant (horizontal) drilling techniques which could extend outward in all directions for up to ten thousand feet (approx. 2 miles). In addition, a new road is proposed parallel to much of Lodosa Drive to carry building materials into the project area and remove waste, debris, and oil in huge oil tanker trucks. During the initial phase of drilling and testing, a large drilling rig (approx. 130 feet tall) will be erected and three test wells will be drilled. This first phase of the project will operate around the clock, 7 days/week, for 25-30 days for each of the three wells. We can expect a significant increase in truck traffic (i.e. 10,000 gallon capacity trucks), and associated congestion, new sources of noise, soil, and air pollution, and an overall negative impact on our quality of life.**

**The project must pass an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) before it can go forward. A draft EIR will likely be presented sometime this summer and be the subject of extensive community scrutiny and public hearings. There are many serious questions which have been raised by residents about the effects of this project on:**

- The flora and fauna of the natural habitat**
- Pollution of air, water and land**
- Potential carcinogenic effects**
- New sources of noise**
- Increased traffic congestion**
- Negative impact on property values**
- The aesthetic, cultural, and recreational impact**

- The possibility of a catastrophic event

It is noted by many that this project is proposed near known active earthquake faults. In addition, troubling questions have been raised about:

- How Matrix Oil was chosen in a seemingly non-competitive bidding process
- The history and capabilities of this company

Though the City Council believes that this project can help restore millions of dollars to the city's budget negatively impacted by the economic downturn and loss of car dealerships along Whittier Boulevard, this has yet to be proven, and serious questions remain. Many of us believe that this is an unwise, get-rich-quick scheme which will not bring the promised economic benefits to the city, and at too great a cost. Many others of us also believe that the city can find other more sustainable alternatives for economic development and to plug its budget gap.

The country, and indeed the world, is now watching with horror and dismay the massive oil explosion, fire, loss of life, and oil spill from BP's giant rig in the Gulf of Mexico, which threatens to become one of the world's greatest environmental disasters, causing unspeakable harm to the environment and economy of the Gulf states. In response, Gov. Schwarzenegger, so alarmed by the Gulf disaster, has cancelled all oil drilling off California's shores, stating, "Why would we want to take on that kind of risk?" We remain mindful of the 2005 explosion and fire at Matrix's oil site on Honolulu Terrace in the Whittier Hills which claimed the life of an oil worker and burned out of control for over 24 hours until an out-of state company could be called in to extinguish it. We do not believe that these disasters need to be repeated in Whittier.

Whittier Hills Oil Watch (WHOW) is a newly-formed, non-partisan, grassroots organization that opposes drilling for oil in the Whittier Hills and which is calling for complete transparency and disclosure of all aspects of this project, which is likely to affect our communities for decades to come. We invite you to learn more about this project:

- Visit our website at: <http://www.whittierhillsoilwatch.org/>
- Come to one of our community meetings
- Invite a speaker from WHOW to address your organization, group or church
- Attend City Council meetings &/or watch the proceedings on cable TV
- Attend hearings on the EIR report when it is issued this summer
- Join your neighbors in opposing this project
- Read and consider our fact sheets on various aspects of this project
- Support and join WHOW

Respectfully,  
Dan Duran, PhD.  
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President, WHOW