

# STOP THE Oil Project

On October 25, 2011 the Whittier Planning Commission by a 5-0 vote approved a conditional use permit that will allow Texas-based Clayton Williams Energy and Matrix Oil Company to begin oil drilling operations in the Whittier Hills. The City Council is anticipated to ratify the permit on November 8, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel in Whittier.

## TEN REASONS WHITTIER FAMILIES SAY NO TO OIL DRILLING

### 1. Whittier is NOT an "oil town".

Whittier officials suggest that aggressive oil drilling and mineral mining should occur because Whittier is an "oil town." Whittier residents fought for 20 years to remove the oil companies from our hills and restore the hills to their natural condition as Open Space land. **Whittier is a residential community that prides itself on the pristine condition of its homes and its hills.** The hills are a resource that enhances property values and makes Whittier a desirable choice for families with young children.

### 2. Schools, fire and police will not receive royalty money.

The oil companies suggest that oil royalties paid to the City of Whittier may be used to fund education. In turn, members of the City Council have implied that royalties can be used to pay for city services such as fire and police. **These assertions are blatant falsehoods.** Even if the City can legally collect the desired 30% royalties that the oil company promises, limitations of Proposition "A" and state law will prohibit the City from granting royalties to school districts. **Under Proposition "A" and the state law that funded the purchase of the hills, all profits must be used for the Whittier Hills and for improving parks and expanding recreation uses.**

### 3. Whittier may receive nominal royalties, if any.

Because the City of Whittier purchased the Whittier Hills with limitations imposed by Proposition "A" and state laws, the City owns the property as a trustee for all county residents. Under Proposition "A" all profits earned from the 1,290 acres must be paid to the County of Los Angeles, with minor exceptions that do not apply to the Whittier Hills. Under the lease, Whittier may only collect royalties if it owns the mineral rights. **Since Whittier is only a trustee for the 1,290 acres, the County is the true owner and beneficiary of the royalties. Whittier may never see a dime of the royalties.**

The City's consultant, Esther Feldman confirmed that the City may only take its proportionate share of oil royalties. Incorrectly, however, Esther Feldman advises the City that the proportionate share may be negotiated with the County of Los Angeles. The proportion is established by law as the number of households that pay the Proposition "A" assessment. Whittier has approximately 1% of the houses within the assessment district. Whittier's 1% of the negotiated \$7,500,000 oil royalty is \$75,000 per year. **Whittier stands to lose its preserve and gain the nominal sum of \$75,000 per year.**

### 4. The oil-drilling project will destroy the Whittier Hills habitat.

The oil-drilling project will require extensive excavation of the hillsides, filling of ravines with dirt as well as the destruction of plant and animal life. The proposed north access road will go through 1.2 miles of core habitat area, which entails the removal of coastal sage scrub that would affect the California gnatcatcher, a species considered threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The lease grants the oil company exclusive rights for an undetermined amount of time, to explore, prospect, mine and drill for gas and oil on land that was purchased with voter approval for the preservation and creation of Open Space land, not mineral exploitation. **The mineral extraction lease encourages aggressive exploration and permits surface use for all necessary operations, no matter how damaging; including the building of an oil processing facility, gas plant, storage tanks, truck loading facility, construction and maintenance activities as well as the drilling of up to 60 wells in the preserve.**

### 5. Surface operations will consume excessive land.

The City's recently released report by Esther Feldman reveals that the placement of three wells will negatively impact 33 acres of land. **Whittier's lease with the oil companies allows for up to 60 wells** if drilling operations result in "paying quantities" of oil - **60 wells would consume the entire area purchased with Proposition "A" funds.** Matrix's environmental consultant confirms that oil drilling operations will impact approximately 40 acres of core preserve.

### 6. Oil drilling operations threaten local groundwater resources.

The mineral extraction lease authorizes the oil company to extract groundwater without limitation on quantity. **Oil extraction operations use thousands of gallons of water per day.** The water once used comes out of the oil wells mixed with oil, which contains carcinogenic (cancer causing) and toxic agents. The contaminated water will then be stored at the surface in several large tanks before being pumped back into the ground through one of three planned reinjection wells. **Any leaks or spills of the contaminated water would result in significant environmental contamination - potentially exposing residents of all ages and workers in the area to these toxins.** Leaking pipes and surface oil spills are a common occurrence among oil producing facilities as documented in various newspaper articles within the last year by the Orange County Register and Los Angeles Times.

### 7. Traffic congestion and trucks traveling "on Colima" and through residential neighborhoods.

Numerous streets and residential neighborhoods will be impacted by large trucks coming and going from the project area. These streets include; Catalina, Colima, Mar Vista, Penn Street, and Whittier Boulevard as well as other streets in surrounding area as trucks head to and from freeway entrances. In addition, a 2.8 mile oil and natural gas pipeline will be installed under Colima Road to La Mirada and Leffingwell Avenue, affecting commuters using Colima for a period of 12 to 18 months. **This construction will stall traffic on Colima, which may cause vehicles to find alternate residential routes.**



### 8. Whittier sits in an active earthquake fault zone.

**The oil drilling project site is less than 2000 feet from an active seismic fault. The project is also within an area identified as having "a potential for permanent ground displacements" from earthquake-induced landslides and liquefaction,** according to the State of California Geological Survey seismic hazards map. The map shows that the entire project area, from the processing plant to the landfill road heading toward Penn street as well as the pipelines heading toward Colima road are surrounded or cross areas where landslides or liquefaction could occur. If a landslide or liquefaction occurred it would damage critical project infrastructure, which would result in leaks or spills during any phase of the project from grading to drilling to production. Uncontained leakage or spills would flow toward the Arroyo Pescadero or Canon Verde channels, which are unlined (bare dirt). Any leakage or spill would flow behind homes along Catalina Avenue from Mar Vista to Whittier Blvd.

### 9. The City Council has knowingly violated the Whittier City Charter.

The City Charter expressly prohibits the City Council from executing a lease that is in excess of 25 years without voter approval. **The current oil lease violates the Charter, because it exceeds the 25-year term, therefore requiring voter approval; but more importantly, violates a similar state law that requires county-wide voter approval.** Also, Open Space uses are a matter of "statewide concern" and therefore outside the City Council's charter authority to regulate.

### 10. The City's collection of royalties is a misuse of tax dollars.

City officials are promising local businesses and residents improved services to be paid for with the oil drilling royalties. The City plans on replacing the existing park budget with oil company royalties and then shift the existing park allowance to enhance the general fund and pay for salaries, pensions, and other perks. This shifting of moneys violates Proposition "A", because the funds would maintain park services at their current level and not improve or expand those services. The City's redistribution of dollars would also reduce the benefit received by property owners in the County of Los Angeles who are also being assessed for the purchase of the Whittier Hills, violating **The Right to Vote on Taxes Act, Proposition 218.**

## How You Can Help

### ATTEND THE NOVEMBER 8th CITY COUNCIL MEETING!

Speak up - let the City Council know the majority of Whittier residents are against the project. This is your last opportunity to "Save Our Hills!"

**Date:** November 8, 2011 (Hearings will likely continue; November 9, 14, and 15)  
**Time:** 6:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Radisson Hotel, 7320 Greenleaf Avenue, Whittier, California 90602

Bring your family, friends, neighbors and coworkers. Let your voice be heard, speak for up to three minutes and show your opposition to the project!

## Make a Donation

We need your financial support in order to FIGHT the City of Whittier and the City Council. Please make a commitment to donate today. No amount is too small or too large. Online donations can be made via PayPal by going to [www.OSLDF.org](http://www.OSLDF.org). Checks can be mailed to: WHOW P.O. Box 4422, Whittier, CA 90607-4422. Make checks out to: **Open Space Legal Defense Fund.**



[WhittierHillsOilWatch.org](http://WhittierHillsOilWatch.org)

