

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT THE LOS PADRES OIL & GAS DRILLING DECISION

MYTH #1: New drilling will cause no more than 21 acres of surface disturbance.

- ✓ **FACT:** The agency's decision specifically allows up to 4,277 acres of surface disturbance.
- ✓ **FACT:** The agency's 20.4-acre figure is based on a twelve-year-old report that uses oil prices and other economic indicators to predict the extent of new oil drilling on the forest. This "Reasonably Foreseeable Development" report predicted that in 2005, oil prices would "most likely" be \$24 per barrel (\$33.87 in 2005 dollars, due to inflation). Today, crude oil prices have skyrocketed to around \$68 per barrel, nearly *triple* the amount predicted in the report. With these record-high oil prices, demand for new drilling will be significantly higher than expected.
- ✓ **FACT:** The agency's reliance on "surface disturbance" is misleading and underestimates the true amount of acreage impacted by oil and gas drilling. Drilling requires a vast network of roads, pipelines, transmission wires, and other infrastructure. While the footprint of this infrastructure may be relatively small, the impacts spill over across a much larger area. A single oil derrick can ruin the views of an entire landscape, a narrow pipeline can bisect an entire watershed, and air pollution can extend as much as 200 miles from a drilling site.

MYTH #2: New drilling will be located next to existing oil development.

- ✓ **FACT:** There is no requirement that new drilling be clustered next to existing oil wells. On the contrary, the decision allows surface disturbance to sprawl out across High Oil and Gas Potential Areas totaling 52,075 acres.
- ✓ **FACT:** According to the agency's own maps, new oil drilling areas are located up to 9 miles from existing drilling areas in the San Cayetano HOGPA, up to 8 miles from existing drilling areas in the Sespe HOGPA, and up to 7 miles from existing drilling sites in the South Cuyama HOGPA.
- ✓ **FACT:** Existing drilling areas already encroach into pristine areas and sensitive habitats. Over 500 oil wells have been drilled to date in the Sespe Oil Field, which shares a border with the Sespe Wilderness Area, the Sespe Condor Sanctuary, and the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Adding more drilling here will place even more pressure on an already sensitive area. New drilling in South Cuyama will encroach on three additional wilderness areas, and would be located in an area the agency itself describes as an "Area of High Ecological Significance."

MYTH #3: The decision protects pristine roadless areas from oil drilling.

- ✓ **FACT:** It is true that the agency's decision prohibits surface disturbance in roadless areas. However, the decision still allows oil drilling right up alongside the boundaries of roadless and wilderness areas without any buffers, allowing air and water pollution to spill over into these protected areas. The South Cuyama HOGPA is 93% roadless, while the San Cayetano HOGPA is 88% roadless, meaning that nearly any additional drilling will impact roadless lands.

MYTH #4: New drilling will not harm the Condor or other endangered species.

- ✓ **FACT:** The agency's decision allows development of 3,468 acres of suitable habitat and 82 acres of occupied habitat for threatened and endangered species, including the California condor, arroyo toad, San Joaquin kit fox, California red-legged frog, steelhead, and other species at risk of extinction.
- ✓ **FACT:** The Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service concludes that "although California condors may be adversely affected, few or none are likely to be killed" as a result of expanded oil drilling. The potential death of a single condor would jeopardize ongoing recovery efforts, and would permanently threaten one of the world's most endangered birds.
- ✓ **FACT:** All three of the proposed drilling areas are right next to sensitive condor habitat. The San Cayetano and Sespe drilling areas share a border with the Sespe Condor Sanctuary and the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. The South Cuyama HOGPA is located along a primary condor flight corridor, and is near the Lion Canyon condor reintroduction site. According to the FEIS, 135 acres of suitable condor habitat will be subject to oil development.
- ✓ **FACT:** The Biological Opinion and Standard Lease Terms place restrictions on drilling to protect condor habitat, but these restrictions are grossly inadequate. For example, they require a 1.5 mile buffer around nesting sites and a 0.5

mile buffer around active roost sites. While at first glance these buffers appear large, condors can typically travel up to 120 miles in a single day. Bruce Palmer, former coordinator of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Condor Recovery Program, states that these buffers are "way too close" and that such a small distance is "inconsequential, almost as good as no buffer at all."

- ✓ **FACT:** *Existing* oil drilling continues to adversely affect the survival and recovery of the California condor. The first condor to be brooded and hatched in the wild in nearly two decades died after the chick's father dipped its head into a pool of crude oil. And for the past three years, condor hatchlings have died after ingesting large amounts of trash. Last year, a chick was found with 36 bottle caps in its stomach, and eventually had a pound of screws, bolts, and rags surgically removed. These very same items are often strewn about existing and abandoned oil sites.

MYTH #5: We need to open up our public lands for oil drilling to reduce our nation's dependence on foreign sources of oil.

- ✓ **FACT:** The Forest Service admits that its decision to expand drilling in the Los Padres National Forest will yield less than a day's supply of oil at current consumption rates. Such a small amount would do nothing to bring our nation towards renewable fuels and energy independence.
- ✓ **FACT:** Despite widespread access to public land in 12 Western states, in the past 15 years the oil and gas industry has produced just 53 days of oil and 221 days of natural gas at U.S. consumption rates. During that time, industry had access to more than 200 million acres of Western public lands, an area nearly twice the size of California.

MYTH #6: New drilling technology causes minimal impacts to the environment.

- ✓ **FACT:** New technologies like "slant drilling" aim to reduce the amount of vegetation cleared from sensitive areas. However, when accounting for noise pollution, visual impacts, air, water, and soil pollution, drilling still inflicts lasting impacts to large areas of public lands, regardless of whether innovative technologies are used.

MYTH #7: Congress requires the Forest Service to open up new areas for drilling.

- ✓ **FACT:** Congress did not require the Forest Service to actually open up new areas to drilling. Rather, laws like the Mineral Leasing Act and the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act only require the agency to *evaluate* all lands for their oil drilling potential. After conducting this evaluation, the agency could have legally decided not to open up any new areas to drilling.

MYTH #8: Oil companies need more access to national forests and our public lands must be managed for "multiple uses."

- ✓ **FACT:** A recent investigation showed that the Los Padres National Forest has the highest rate of oil industry control in California, with over 50 active oil and gas leases in or near the forest and 180 producing wells. The Los Padres National Forest is already providing its fair share of oil to the nation, and doesn't need an influx of additional drilling.

MYTH #9: Oil companies aren't very interested in drilling in new areas of the forest.

- ✓ **FACT:** An internal agency report states that "there is *substantial interest* by industry in leasing lands for oil and gas exploration and development" in Los Padres. The oil industry played a major role in developing the agency's proposal. The agency requested comments on various studies from companies like Unocal Northern American Oil and Gas Division, ARCO, Shell Oil Co., Exxon Company U.S.A., Chevron U.S.A., the Western States Petroleum Association, and the Independent Oil Producers Agency.

MYTH #10: New oil drilling provides jobs and supports local communities.

- ✓ **FACT:** Forest recreation and tourism provide far greater economic benefits than oil drilling. In fact, a recent Forest Service survey showed that the average forest visitor spends \$47 per visit to the Los Padres at local shops, restaurants, and hotels, supporting an \$81.7 million per year industry. Expanding oil drilling into new areas will threaten the forest's wild landscapes, reduce recreation opportunities, and decrease tourism dollars coming in to our local economies. New oil drilling is bad for the forest and bad for our local businesses.