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**Gaviota Coast Oil Spill Strengthens Resolve of Community Environmental Council**

**Santa Barbara, CA, May 20, 2015** – Dave Davis, President & CEO of the Community Environmental Council (CEC), released the following statement today in response to yesterday’s oil spill at Refugio Beach along the Gaviota Coast:

“The Community Environmental Council is, like much of our community, feeling both shock and outrage over yesterday’s 21,000 gallon oil spill, caused when a Plains All American pipeline ruptured. For our founders, this is the worst type of déjà vu, recalling the 1969 oil spill over 45 years ago that spurred CEC’s formation. Sadly, we were born out of a dirty energy crisis, and we have made it our mission to transition the Santa Barbara region away from fossil fuels.

Yesterday was both a step backward and a step forward in our fight to preserve the nature we love and protect the climate. The tragic Refugio oil spill off the Gaviota Coast – a unique bioregion that CEC fought successfully to protect in the 1970’s – is a sharp reminder of all that still needs to be done to defend our precious coast. Both our founders and the next generation of activists who comprise our team have been hit hard by the images of destruction, and we are feeling this spill at a visceral level.

We are dedicated to preserving this particular coastline not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is a place we love. Our staff knows each beach not as a name on the map, but as a place where we surf, swim, walk, and bird-watch. It is where we bring our children; the place that we call home.

On a practical level, we also know that this spill could not have happened in a worse place. Oil spills are devastating no matter where they occur, but Gaviota happens to be one of only five Mediterranean ecosystems in the world. It is a pivotal bioregion between the cooler waters of the north and the warmer south, with a vibrant diversity of species not found elsewhere.

At the same time, yesterday was a step forward. After months of advocating for stringent thresholds on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, CEC staff members emerged triumphant when the Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors passed a motion to reduce 99.2% of GHG emissions for stationary sources. This decision will have far-reaching implications for county-wide policies, and is a huge step toward the goal of moving toward clean, renewable energy.

While we are moved to anger and sickness over this spill, we have a path forward. Multiple clean energy initiatives that have been in the works for months and years happen to have coalesced this month into opportunities for the public to engage. In May, you can take part in guiding the Bike Master Plan, comment on the County’s Energy and Climate Action Plan, and participate in a series of events on Community Choice Energy.



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We encourage community members to channel their dismay over yesterday’s gut-wrenching tragedy into positive action. As you hear the helicopters overhead racing to rescue our coastline, increase your involvement in decisions that will help move us away from fossil fuels. Together, we can ensure that this is the last oil spill in Santa Barbara; together we can create a post-oil world.

The Coast Guard/EPA on-scene coordinators have requested the public allow them space to respond to the oil spill clean up with the proper tools, equipment, and personnel. If you see an oiled animal, please do not touch or approach it. Instead, please report the animal(s) to the OWCN Response Hotline at 1-877-UCD-OWCN (823-6926) or the Santa Barbara Wildlife Care Center (805) 681-1080.”

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**About the Community Environmental Council**

In the wake of the devastating 1969 oil spill off Santa Barbara’s shores, a group of local concerned citizens began talking about a different way of looking at environmental systems, and the Community Environmental Council was born. During that time, Senator Gaylord Nelson visited Santa Barbara to view the oil spill’s damage. When he returned to Washington, D.C., he introduced a bill designating April 22 as a national day to celebrate the earth, sparking a national environmental movement. In CEC’s first act as a nonprofit, it hosted one of the first Earth Day celebrations in the U.S. in 1970.

Since that time, CEC has remained at the forefront of the environmental movement, leading the Santa Barbara region – and at times California and the nation – in creative solutions to some of the toughest environmental problems. CEC’s work focuses on moving our region off of fossil fuels and protecting the climate. We encourage global change through local action with five initiatives: Drive Less, Choose Electric, Go Solar, Ditch Plastic, and Eat Local.

**For more information on CEC:**

- Find CEC on the web at [cecsb.org](http://cecsb.org)
- Like CEC on Facebook at [facebook.com/cecsb](https://facebook.com/cecsb)
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