

# Coastal Commission to review renovation of closed oil operation

Scott Hadly, Ventura County Star, 8-5-10

Apart from a tattered piece of paper clipped to a gate at the pier leading to Rincon Island off Mussel Shoals, there is little notice about the extensive renovation plans to the wooden structure, rock rip-rap and entryway that were damaged in a storm almost three years ago.

The California Coastal Commission is scheduled to discuss the proposed work at a meeting next week in San Luis Obispo. The commission staff is recommending approval of the project.

Work on the island, where oil is pumped and then transported via a pipeline to a processing facility inland, stopped after storms damaged the structure in late 2007. State Lands Commission officials shut down operations there after residents in the Mussel Shoals area raised concerns about the integrity of the 3,000-foot-long pier that leads to the man-made island. Erosion had cut into the concrete base that anchors the pier to the land and wires appeared to be dangling along the length of the pier.

Although the owners of the oil lease, Greka Energy, made some emergency repairs soon after the storm, pier operations on the island have remained suspended, according to a report by the commission. The company is proposing to drive in new wooden pilings and repair the pipeline, roadway and rocks that protect the pier.

Residents at Mussel Shoals, who have had a sometimes fractious relationship with Greka Energy, have raised concerns about the proposed work. The company is known for having a checkered past because of problems with its oil production operations in northern Santa Barbara County.

Homeowner Ron Austin said the first issue is that residents haven't had time to go through the 90-page-plus proposal.

Residents also have specific concerns about what's already there, including an unsightly chain-link fence topped with razor wire. Austin and other residents also are worried about noise and traffic, particularly since CalTrans is scheduled to begin an extensive widening of Highway 101 along that route. Beyond that, Austin said he has ongoing issues with Greka, which he contends has a poor record of maintaining the property.

Officials from Greka could not be reached for comment.

In comments submitted to the Coastal Commission, Austin said: "Quite frankly, if the Commission has a sound legal basis upon which it can deny repairs and therefore oil drilling operations would cease on the shoreline, the Commission should take this opportunity to do so."

The commission is scheduled to discuss the repair plan at its meeting Thursday.