

Leaking Ventura County oil facility remediated

Filmore Gazette, 12-9-10

The California Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR) recently completed remediation work at an oil facility to protect public safety and the environment – in particular, a surrounding orchard.

“The oil facility is located within a large avocado orchard, and the owner was thrilled we were stepping in to take care of the problem,” explained Bruce Hesson, chief of DOGGR’s Ventura office.

DOGGR is part of the California Department of Conservation.

During a routine inspection last January, a DOGGR field engineer noted several deficiencies at the Fillmore site. Owned by Crest Oil & Gas Management Corp., the operation had been shut-in since December 2007. A leaking pipe, a standing mixture of oil and water inside a retaining wall, and two leaking 500-barrel tanks were discovered.

After making numerous unsuccessful attempts to have Crest bring the site into full compliance, DOGGR issued a formal order to perform corrective work on July. 22. When the operator failed to appeal or do the necessary work in the time allowed, DOGGR contracted with M.G. Taylor Equipment Inc. to do the remediation.

Work began in early September. As a spill prevention measure, all the remaining fluid in the idle tanks was removed. Two of the four tanks at the site were disassembled and scrapped. One of them contained thick drilling mud. The contractor had to bring in a “super sucker” vacuum truck to get it all out.

All material removed from the tanks was tested to ensure that it was non-hazardous and then was properly disposed of at Anterra’s permitted disposal facility in Oxnard. In addition, weed abatement was performed and other junk equipment removed.

“The biggest issue was that there was a well cellar full of silt,” Hesson said. “There was no capacity left, and oil was floating on top. With the rains coming, that oil could flow down a slight grade and into the avocado orchard. The grower is certified organic, and understandably was concerned about losing his certification if oil got onto the field. We cleaned out the cellar, pulling out about a barrel of oil (42 gallons), and built a berm around it to keep water out. There shouldn’t be any more threat to the orchard.”

The work cost \$103,099.60, including disposal fees of \$43,627.09. Crest Oil’s blanket cash bond of \$100,000 will be used to recover the majority of the cost.

Crest Oil & Gas Management Corp., based in Houston, reported peak production of 118,034 barrels for the two wells at the site in 1982. Production of 154 barrels was reported in 2007, but none since. Crest also has 16 other wells in Northern California.

“This site was a public nuisance that, with one good storm, could have become something more serious,” State Oil and Gas Supervisor Elena Miller said, “We’re here to make sure that oil and gas are produced in an environmentally responsible manner in California and are pleased to have helped remedy this situation.”

California ranks third in the nation in oil production behind Alaska and Texas. California produced 230.1 million barrels of oil in 2009; the Ventura district produced 9,247,000 barrels.