

# Tapping Goleta's Natural Gas

## *Gas Company Seeks to Extract in Order to Expand Underground Storage Facility near Airport*

**Matt Kettmann, Santa Barbara Independent, 3-19-10**

Few realize that the Southern California Gas Company stores 21.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas in a reservoir 10,000 feet below the ground of the South Patterson Avenue area in Goleta. Now the company is looking to expand that storage capability by another three to five billion cubic feet and, to do so, they're seeking permission from the County of Santa Barbara to drill into an adjacent but untapped reserve and extract the natural gas there. To do that, they'll need to erect a 133-foot drill — which would likely be viewable from many parts of the Goleta Valley — in the area for about three months at the start of the project and then again for another two months one year later.

The project, which would occur in what's known as La Goleta Storage Field, was the subject of a hearing at Goleta City Hall on Thursday night, where the county's Energy Division laid out the plans as part of an initial step of the project's environmental review process. While the division's planner John Day believes most of the other impacts associated with the drilling — from noise to biological and archaeological resources — can be mitigated, he said before the meeting, "You can't hide a 133-foot tower." Day said that he'd only received a couple calls and an email or two before Thursday night's meeting, but expects more to come in as the April 12 public comment deadline draws near.

According to the county's report on the project, the Gas Company purchases natural gas when prices are low and then stores it at La Goleta, which is one of a few similar storage facilities across Central and Southern California. Then when demand is high, such as during the cold winter months, the gas is extracted and sold to consumer across 12 California counties. The proposed project involves developing two production wells, two exploratory wells to seek out more "native" gas, 2,800 feet of underground pipeline, and a "dehydration unit." Half of the the profits made from extracting the natural gas would be passed onto the consumer, said Day.

The meeting kicked off La Goleta's public comment period, which is mandated as part of the environmental impact report that's being developed. Comments, which are being accepted until 5 p.m. on April 12, should be sent to: County of Santa Barbara, Planning & Development, Attn: John Day, 123 East Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101.