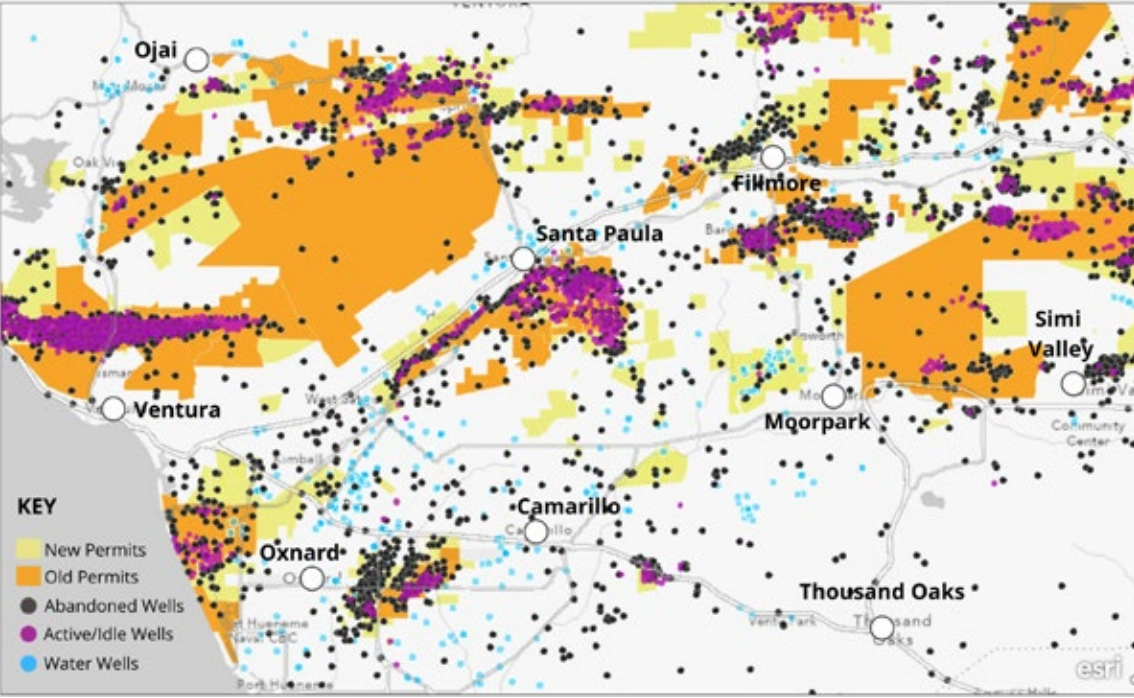


Summer 2022



# OIL INDUSTRY POURS \$6.5M TO OVERTURN BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VOTE

JUNE BALLOT REFERENDUM ASKS VOTERS TO AFFIRM BOARD'S ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS



As this map illustrates, the majority of Ventura County's oil and gas permits are older permits issued between 1920 - 1970, before environmental reviews were instituted. These "antiquated" permits allow any number of wells to be drilled and any method of drilling to be used with no environmental review required...and they never expire passing from one oil company to the next in perpetuity.

**Just like the SOAR campaign, a local grassroots effort is fighting to better protect a precious resource in Ventura County, this time around it is our water.**

In a critical vote, Measures A & B (covering coastal and non-coastal areas), will appear on the upcoming June ballot. A "YES" vote will support the VC Board of Supervisors decision to better safeguard Ventura County's water supplies from the possibility of petrochemical contamination.

Covering over 127,000 acres in Ventura County's farmlands, open spaces and communities these "antiquated" permits (shown in orange on the map) include over 1000 oil and gas wells that have been drilled near or through a water aquifer. A "YES" vote will close this industry loophole so that new well-drilling undergoes the same consistent environmental review that all other wells must go through, using modern-day health and safety reviews to assess the potential risks to our water supplies. ☆



# WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

## ZONING UPHELD

Just last year we celebrated the adoption of a first-of-its-kind Wildlife Corridor zoning that was adopted by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors. Now we're happy to report that lawsuits filed against it (by the same groups that also opposed SOAR), were all soundly rejected! The new zoning adds standards for fencing and lighting, buffer requirements from creeks and from wildlife crossings, and requirements for clustering development when building in critical wildlife corridors. Opponents argued that a rigorous CEQA\* review was needed. In rejecting their arguments, the Judge ruled that there is a "common sense exemption" from CEQA on projects that *protect* the environment.

## GROUNDBREAKING FOR THE LIBERTY CANYON WILDLIFE BRIDGE!

On Earth Day, April 22, 2022, we celebrated the groundbreaking of what will be the largest wildlife bridge in the nation, if not the world! The bridge, to be built at Liberty Canyon in Agoura Hills, will be planted with native plants and look like an extension of the open space hills on either side of the 101 freeway. The bridge will help prevent

the extinction of the Santa Monica Mountain mountain lions and other wildlife. In addition to protecting local species, the bridge will also show the hundreds of thousands of people who pass under it annually just how much we value nature!

## POTENTIAL OF ANOTHER WILDLIFE BRIDGE AT THE CONEJO GRADE?

Ventura County might see its first wildlife bridge too! The State has provided a \$327,000 grant to the Ventura County Transportation Commission to work with the National Park Service to study the potential of adding another wildlife bridge at the top of the Conejo Grade. Having wildlife bridges at both ends of the Conejo Valley, one at Liberty Canyon in Los Angeles County and one at the Conejo Grade, will reduce the inbreeding that is leading to mountain lion mutations that are considered harbingers towards extinction. We are grateful that Caltrans, the National Park Service, Conservancies, the State Wildlife Conservation Board, and now the Ventura County Transportation Commission, are all stepping up to help preserve our region's wildlife! ☆

\*CEQA: California Environmental Quality Act that requires potential impacts to the environment to be reviewed, for example with Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs).



# AMERICA *THE* BEAUTIFUL

In January 2022, President Biden signed an Executive Order known as America the Beautiful. Often referred to as the 30 X 30 plan, it seeks to set aside 30% of U.S. lands as Protected Areas by the year 2030 to improve biodiversity and climate. Governor Newsom also enacted a California 30 X 30 Plan with the goal of conserving 30 percent of California lands and coastal waters by 2030.

Can these 30 X 30 goals be achieved? A deeper dive reveals that achievement depends on definitions, purpose, how we

distinguish between marine and terrestrial conservation areas, how we measure, etc. For instance, the Point Mugu Naval Air Station does a superb job of protecting the environment, although that is not their main objective (nor are we advocating that it should be).

There are also conservation challenges. Ecosystem boundaries rarely follow political boundaries and multi-level government compliance will all be needed to make it work while still protecting private property rights. However, with support from the citizenry and

the political will to get it done, we believe it can happen and are heartened to see the beginning of some funding from both the State and Federal government to acquire key areas of habitat. Further research and action that pairs conservation scientists and decision makers will be needed and as always, the support of the public.

We are fortunate in Ventura County to have identified lands for preservation as part of our SOAR movement and that also has put us ahead of the curve. ☆

## PROTECTING COYOTES: HEAR THEM HOWL



When a gated community next to hundreds of acres of natural open space in Thousand Oaks began wiping out coyotes, howls of protests were heard from activists demanding humane treatment.

The Homeowners Association had hired a pest control company that uses traps to snare coyotes' limbs. Since it is not legal to relocate coyotes, trapped coyotes are then killed. Some pest firms do that

with cyanide gas. The crime these particular coyotes were paying for with their lives was entering a gated community to hunt for easy pickings.

Residents who put out pet food, have food scraps accessible in open trash cans, fail to clean their barbecues or pick up fallen fruit from their trees, or leave their small pets unattended without adequate fencing, unintentionally entice coyotes to their yards.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife offers a Wildlife Watch program and Conservation Coaches to empower residents to address and resolve human-wildlife conflicts in their community. Communities are provided with the support and training needed to develop integrated wildlife management plans specific to their needs.

To learn more contact [Kent.Smirl@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Kent.Smirl@wildlife.ca.gov) ☆

## SPRING WILDFLOWERS

*DID YOU CATCH THEM?*



SHOOTING STARS

Found in the spring after the first rain showers, they go dormant again until the next spring.

Early bloomers with delicate small white flowers, a lone female flower here and there and large groupings of male flowers all on the same vine.



WILD CUCUMBER

Found near poison oak, mugwort can help relieve itching. The leaves have a medicine-like smell of sage and camphor.



MUGWORT



PO Box 7352  
Ventura, California 93006-7352  
[www.soarvc.org](http://www.soarvc.org)

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## NEW VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY FIGHTS FOR VENTURA COUNTY'S OPEN SPACES

Last year, Erik Nasarenko was appointed as our County's new District Attorney. Erik has brought a fresh approach to the District Attorney's office. We know him as a victims' advocate and a stellar prosecutor who has locked up violent criminals. We can now add to his prosecution efforts, going after polluters.

**To ensure that our unique coastal communities, agricultural lands, and hillsides are protected, Erik has worked with a specialized team of prosecutors to create the first ever policies and procedures in the District Attorney's Office for prosecuting environmental crimes and holding wrongdoers accountable.**



*The District Attorney's settlement with a company that illegally sold highly toxic anticoagulant rodenticides included funds to support the National Park Services' mountain lion research programs.*

This new emphasis and approach has already benefited Ventura County. For example, his Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit successfully pursued a company responsible for a fuel spill at the Camarillo Airport that encroached on the watershed, making sure that they cleaned it up and paid all fines and county costs.

His prosecutors went after companies that polluted our local harbors and illegally sold pesticides by structuring tough agreements that stopped the conduct and required assistance for the environment, including \$100,000 for tracking, monitoring and protecting our endangered mountain lion population. Erik tells us, *"I care deeply about preserving Ventura County's open spaces, wildlife, and natural resources, which are among our nation's most beautiful."* We couldn't agree with him more! ☆