Platform Holly Abandonment Project – June 2020 Update

The Commission and ExxonMobil are suspending plug and abandonment work on Platform Holly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This decision is based on several factors, including the large number of people needed to operate the equipment necessary to safely plug and abandon the wells, the difficulty in transporting sufficient personnel on crew boats while physically distancing, and the relatively small size of the Platform, which makes physical distancing difficult.

The Commission and ExxonMobil initially suspended operations in March, pursuant to their pandemic response plans. Since then, the Commission’s contractor, Beacon West Energy, has maintained and secured the Platform and will continue to do so during the work suspension. A 4-person crew has been conducting preventive maintenance and preparing the drilling rig for the next phase of work. All wells are shut-in and secured, and rented equipment will be removed or warehoused to avoid deterioration from the offshore elements until plug and abandonment work can resume.

You may notice activity on and around the Platform in the coming weeks. These activities include removing heavy equipment used during the plugging and abandonment operation and transporting this equipment to shore. The platform crane will be operational and there will be increased boat traffic. Commission staff and its contractor will continue to monitor the Platform and staff the onshore facilities (the Ellwood Onshore Facility and the Ellwood pier). Commission staff and ExxonMobil will meet regularly to assess the potential for restarting work based on the evolution of the pandemic, significant changes to distancing guidelines, or medical advances in treatment or virus prevention.

Piers PRC 421 Decommissioning

The Commission and ExxonMobil are proceeding with preliminary work to decommission the PRC 421 piers that are located onshore. In early July, workers will clear vegetation on the access road and conduct soil removal tests inside the well caissons (the structure furthest east). Beach use is likely to be intermittently restricted during this time to ensure public safety while heavy equipment is operating at the site.

Virtual Townhall

The Commission and the City of Goleta are planning a virtual townhall in July to update the community and present the latest information on the operations. If you have any questions regarding the work or the timing, please contact Sheri Pemberton, the Commission’s External Affairs Officer, at 916-477-0691 or sheri.pemberton@slc.ca.gov.