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Community and Public Health Advocates Halt Chevron Refinery Expansion at Richmond, CA

Martinez, CA – Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge Barbara Zuniga has ordered an injunction stopping work on Chevron’s refinery expansion project in Richmond, CA designed to allow processing of heavier, dirtier crude.

A new, legal Environmental Impact Report detailing the dirtier, heavier crude oil Chevron planned to refine and the additional pollution and health risks to residents it will generate will be required for the expansion work to continue.

On June 4th 2009, the court found the Environmental Impact Report approved by the City of Richmond legally inadequate because it did not fully disclose, analyze, and mitigate the project's health and environmental impacts.

In her order, Judge Zuniga said: “the EIR fails as an informational document because the project description is unclear and inconsistent as to whether project will or will not enable Chevron to process a heavier crude slate than it is currently processing.”

The coalition of groups who brought this lawsuit pointed out that Chevron has refused to acknowledge its intentions to bring a heavier, dirtier crude oil into the Bay Area to refine at its Richmond refinery. Refining this oil will create more pollution over the Bay Area, especially those living in and around Richmond and the workers at the refinery.

The court found that the city’s Environmental Impact Report was unclear about Chevron’s intentions to increase the flow of dirtier crude oils through the San Francisco Bay and to the refinery. The groups argued that use of this dirtier crude oil will result in more air pollution in Richmond neighborhoods already suffering significant public health impacts. The heavier crude oil also posed greater risks to SF Bay in the event of an oil spill, according to experts for the unions who submitted written testimony in opposition to the Project.

“This decision shows that Big Oil is not above the law. Stopping this project will ensure the City of Richmond studies the potential serious environmental impacts of Chevron’s refinery expansion,” said Will Rostov, an attorney with Earthjustice who filed the lawsuit.

“Today is a great victory for the people of Richmond. We stand with the workers, who, through no fault of their own, began working on a project that was not legal,” said Greg Karras of Communities for a Better Environment. “Considering Chevron earned \$1.84 billion in the first quarter of this year, Chevron should keep these workers on payroll while management fixes the mistakes they made. They can certainly afford to do so.”

“The residents of Richmond do not accept letting Chevron continue to poison our community,” said 33-year Richmond resident and APEN senior organizer Torm Nompraseurt. “This is a victory for the grassroots, and the people who have been suffering the health impacts of the refinery for the past 100 years.”

“This is a historic environmental justice victory,” said Dr. Henry Clark of the West County Toxics Coalition. “The court’s decision gives our community hope and inspiration that the judicial system can work for the people.”

The case *Communities for a Better Environment, Asian Pacific Environmental Network & West County Toxics Coalition v. City of Richmond* was filed in Contra Costa County Superior Court on September 4th, 2008 by attorneys from Earthjustice and CBE.