

Environmental Report: October 2018

Submitted by: Joan Licari

Quemetco:

Two meetings were attended by members of the HHIA Board relating to the Quemetco requests for a permit to extend operations for 10 years (their permit expired 2 years ago) on Sept. 29, 2018 and on Oct. 11, 2018 to increase production by 25%. The two permits are handled by different agencies. The 25% increase permit modification would be issued by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). The 10-year operating extension would be issued by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and does not include the 25% increase.

On Oct. 11, 2018 SCAQMD a second scoping meeting was attended by HHIA Board members Mike Williams, Lucy Pedregon, and Joan Licari. This meeting was held at the Hacienda Heights Community Center 6 p.m.-9 p.m. to inform the public about the proposed increase in production requested by Quemetco, to describe California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, and to receive public comments about the project. This second scoping meeting was held by SCAQMD because the public complained that SCAQMD representatives at a meeting held on Sept. 13, 2018 did not give a proper description of the project or CEQA requirements.

Scoping meetings are the first step in a CEQA process designed to allow public involvement/input in the environmental permitting process. The next step will be preparation of an Environmental Impact Report to evaluate what impacts will result from approval of the project—in this case—the 25% increase in production.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) that they will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be to address a request by Quemetco, a lead/acid battery recycling plant, to expand hours of operation by 25% from 20 to 24 hours a day. The NOP also includes a preliminary evaluation of environmental topics/impacts considered to be significant in impacts. The NOP details what is planned and includes a checklist of potential impacts, indicating which are considered “Significant” to be analyzed further in a draft EIR. The NOP (103 pages) can be downloaded at: <http://www.aqmd.gov/docs/default-source/ceqa/notices/notice-of-preparation/2018-quemetco-nop-only---english-version-clean-082418.pdf>.

At the Oct. 11th meeting, SCAQMD gave a description of the project and the permitting process, then opened the meeting to allow public oral comments. Written comments at the meeting could also be submitted. Residents and other interested parties can also submit written comments until 5 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 25, 2018. The comment period was originally set to end on Oct. 2nd, but now has been extended due to the scheduling of the second scoping meeting.



Major changes requested by Quemetco in their operations will include:

- Increase amount of batteries and lead-bearing materials by 25%
- Allow petroleum coke (in addition to or in lieu of calcined coke) to be used as an additive in the recycling process
- Increase operating hours from 20 to 24 hour/day.
- Increased the amount of finished lead products made.

SCAQMD has determined in the NOP that potentially “Significant Impacts” will include:

- Air Quality and greenhouse gases
- Energy requirements
- Hazards and hazardous materials
- Hydrology and water quality
- Transportation and traffic increase

During the public comment period the public expressed the following concerns/comments:

- Exposure of residents to lead, arsenic, antimony and cadmium—known to be cancer-causing agents and respiratory agents.
- Increased truck traffic to and from the facility
- Proximity of schools, daycare centers, nursing facilities to the facility and concerns about exposure of children/patients to harmful materials from the plant.
- The increased amount of potable water needed at a time of drought conditions
- That plant receives materials from not only the U.S. but foreign areas.
- Concern that the plant has been operating since 1959 and is now the only plant west of the Rockies in the U.S.
- Cumulative impacts to poor air quality of the San Gabriel Valley

- Impacts of facility on local property values
- Social justice issues of one community bearing the impact of a hazardous facility since 1959 increasing their output and potentially emission of harmful materials.
- The plant should be shut down entirely

HHIA will be submitting written comments to SCAQMD about concerns we feel must be addressed in this during environmental process.

The public is encouraged to submit written comments by the Oct. 25, 2018 by 5 p.m.

Submit comments to:

Attn: Ms. Diana Thai
South Coast AQMD 21865 Copley Drive Diamond Bar, CA 91765
By Email: dthai@aqmd.gov
By Fax: 909.396.3982

HHIA set up a meeting held on Sept. 29, 2018 with representatives of Speaker of the California Assembly Ian Calderon's office (Samantha Marquez and Ruby Dueñas) to express our concerns about Quemetco to our local Assemblyman. Mike William, Joan Licari and Lucy Pedregon from the Board attended. The meeting also included representatives from Supervisor Janice Hahn's office-Loren Yokomizo and the Clean Air Coalition of North Whittier and Avocado Heights. The major issue brought up at this meeting was the 2-year delay by DTSC in revealing the results of soils tests within a ¼ mile radius to the public. Our question is why are these results not yet released?

Another issue discussed was DTSC's use of State funding for cleanup of lead/arsenic battery facilities—notably Exide in Vernon but potentially in areas around Quemetco. Funds are being used to discover old historic sites, but they are not on-schedule with known projects at the Exide site in Vernon. This issue was revealed at a meeting in Vernon on July 17, 2018 hosted by DTSC concerning DTSC and battery recycling plants in the entire State of California.

Following the meeting, Ian Calderon's office has reported that the DTSC is planning to have a public meeting in November at the Hacienda Heights Community Center. As of Oct. 11th, the date and time is not official. For that meeting, we have requested that public announcement flyers be in several languages--English, Spanish, and Mandarin, that there be a recording made of the meeting, soil test results be presented with numbers along with updated information on the fingerprinting of the sources of the contaminants. We had also requested the Regional Water Quality Board be represented. They have been invited but have not yet responded.

Los Angeles County Sustainability Plan

I attended an all-day meeting on Sept. 17, 2018 at Los Angeles Trade Tech College hosted by Los Angeles County concerning the first ever **Los Angeles County Sustainability Plan (the Plan)**. Representatives at this meeting included environmental groups, social justice organizations, cities and county areas. Six workshops are planned along with a series of forums. Our County is a two-year process that began in November 2017 and will continue through 2019. A draft of the plan is to be completed near the end of 2019. The planning team is seeking input and feedback from community-based organizations and advocacy groups, County agencies and incorporated cities, the private sector, academic researchers, and the general public.

The Dept. of Regional Planning has been assisting the Chief Sustainability Office with the creation of the Plan. They have brought consultants on board in early February and have started conducting outreach to stakeholders, organizations and representatives from the public.

The LA County Sustainability Plan is an effort to develop a vision/plan for growth in the county that includes co-equal concerns for the environment, biodiversity, the economy, housing requirements, open space and social justice. It is to be a regional approach that will include collaboration across city and county boundaries. It will ultimately provide strategies to support “healthy communities, environmental stewardship, and a just economy”.

What will the Plan address?

It will present a broad vision and comprehensive framework for city and county initiatives. It will include cities (88) and unincorporated areas and will consider the goals of creating healthy communities, reduction in disparities across race, gender, social differences along with sustainable relationships with the environment.

“The Plan will present a comprehensive pathway to sustainability addressing a wide range of subjects including climate change, water, energy, resource management, land use, transportation, open space, biodiversity, public health, economy and workforce development, housing, resilience, and governance. Countywide goals and strategies will be informed by data as well as stakeholder and community engagement. The planning team will seek input and feedback from community-based organizations and advocacy groups, County agencies and incorporated cities, the private sector, academic researchers, and the general public.”

Who is preparing the plan?

The Chief Sustainability Office of Los Angeles County is leading the development of the Plan, working with an interdisciplinary team of consultants led by BuroHappold Engineering and researchers at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), with stakeholder engagement leadership from Liberty Hill Foundation. Additional support is being provided by Estolano LeSar

Advisors; Fehr & Peers; Gladstein, Neandross & Associates; Global Green; Studio-MLA; and Raimi + Associates.

The meeting I attended included workshops centering on maintaining biodiversity in an urban environment and strategies for involving the public, city and county governmental agencies.

The Los Angeles County General Plan indicates that there presently are 3.3 acres /1000 population of park lands. The standard is 4 acres/1000. One caveat about our numbers--a large amount of the open space acreage is concentrated in just three areas—Griffith Park, the Santa Monica Mountains, and the San Gabriel Mountains. Local areas are most often lacking in open space/parks. In addition, without planning open space can lose functions that were once provided in the past or lost altogether.

Los Angeles has some of the greatest biodiversity in the country due to the variable climates from coastal to high mountains and from wetlands to desert areas. However, 73% of tidal wetlands have been lost and habitat linkages are broken. Offshore kelp forests are damaged. Development increases fire hazards that are also increasing due to climate changes.

Major concerns expressed at the meeting:

- Tradeoffs due to development include housing that can cause habitat fragmentation.
- As city areas become more green with trees and parks, this may lead to gentrification and dislocation of residents in the lower socioeconomic areas.
- There are difficulties in management as there are over 100+ entities that manage landscapes in Los Angeles County.
- Floodplains are developed that lead to potential flood hazards to populations.
- Urbanization brings heat island effects.
- Landscape designs often include exotics that can widely spread and displace native species.
- Housing costs
- Access to parks particularly in low income areas.

This is an ongoing process. To follow the County's efforts and also provide your thoughts, feel free to [sign up and receive info](#) or [join the conversations](#)!