

Environmental Report—Dec. 21, 2015

Submitted by: Joan Licari, Environmental Chair

Quemetco:

The lead-acid battery recycling plant, Quemetco, is located on 7th St. in City of Industry on the border with Hacienda Heights. Homes in Hacienda Heights are within 400 feet of the plant that, since the closing of the Exide plant in Vernon, is the only facility of its kind to recycle batteries west of the Rocky Mountains. It receives batteries, not only from western states but also foreign countries. It is currently in the process of renewing its general permit and is eyeing Exide's business, proposing to increase the amount of material it processes by up to 25 percent.

The Dept. of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) of California as part of this permit process rejected four plans submitted by Quemetco to study lead and arsenic levels within the area. As a result, DTSC developed its own plan that required sampling to a mile radius beyond the plant. This plan was rejected by Quemetco. DTSC recently reduced sampling requirements and the testing radius to ¼ mile.

Quemetco and the state's regulatory agencies have known about elevated levels of lead contamination in the surrounding vicinity of the battery recycling plant since 1991, when tests conducted up to 3,200 feet away from the facility found levels of lead as high as 10,300 parts per million (ppm). The current residential California human health screening level for lead is 80 ppm. However, no cleanup was conducted as a result.

Representing HHIA, I attended a meeting held between the Public Health Dept. of Los Angeles County and the Clean Air Coalition (CAC) of Avocado Heights on Dec. 14, 2015 at Public Health offices in Los Angeles. The CAC reported results of a survey the organization conducted to obtain information on incidence of cancer, respiratory problems, cardiac, learning. Gastrointestinal problems. Although this was not a scientifically conducted study, incidence of respiratory problems and cancer were described by residents currently living in the vicinity of the facility and is of concern to the people living close to the plant.

The attendees of the meeting asked representatives of Public Health for direction on how to proceed to insure that testing is adequate and timely. Concern was raised that coming rains will carry away contamination, possibly polluting nearby San Jose Creek. Representatives of the L.A. County Health Dept. explained that they are not a regulatory agency. However, if a complaint about a problem is received they can, and will, require DTSC to run tests to see if contamination above acceptable levels of lead and arsenic are present in home areas. This action is being considered by the CAC.

They are now very concerned that DTSC is not showing adequate diligence in protecting the residents in the area by reducing sample numbers, how the samples are acquired, and the distance sampling will occur from the plant.

Puente Hills Landfill:

Jeff Yann, past member of the HHIA Board and I attended a meeting on Dec. 16th with Norma Garcia of L.A. County Parks and Recreation and Michelle O'Conner of the consulting firm developing the park plan. Resident have expressed concerns expressed about the Preferred Puente Hills Landfill Plan presented at the community meeting in November. They were concerned that too much infrastructure was being included including the gondola, the bike skills parks, zip lines and slides. The Parks and Recreation Dept. at this meeting presented their perspective about the planning for the park and the rationale for including some of these features that do not seem to represent a passive park perspective that many community members desire.

“Norma Garcia from Parks and Recreation stressed to us that, in fact, while they have had to consider multiple needs of a large number of stakeholders interested in the Landfill Park, they have adhered strongly to the Ecology concept favored by most participants in the park planning process. She also explained that the "gondola" is essentially a system to move visitors from parking areas near the base of the landfill up to the park features located on the upper decks 300 to 500 feet above the parking lots.

A constraint to vehicle movement to the upper areas is experienced in the fact that the park road was committed many years ago as an access road to Rose Hills and will be used both for funeral processions and visitors to the upper part of Rose Hills Cemetery. HHIA opposed this use when it was first presented to the Landfill Citizens Advisory Committee many years ago but the County Sanitation District (CSD) went ahead with its agreement to allow this use after the landfill closed.

She also explained that the zip line, bike skills areas and performance area were concessions to a large group of stakeholders who wanted more active recreation such as soccer fields and ballparks and noted that these facilities will be located in areas well screened from neighboring communities.

The performance area is proposed as little more than the grassy area of Schabarum Park where presentations like Concerts in the Park and Shakespeare in the Park are presented in the summer. Of interest to Hacienda Heights, they are also proposing a regional trailhead for the Skyline Trail, with information on Natural History and Stewardship of the natural areas of the Puente Hills. We have requested this to replace the Seventh Avenue trailhead which is now one of the only locations where trail users from around the region can find adequate parking (on Thanksgiving morning, more than 90 cars were parked along Seventh Avenue, Orange Grove and Old Canyon near this trailhead. Recall that Knabe's letter said that the 15 or so cars that used to park near the west end of Orange Grove was an unacceptable burden to the residents.).

Norma and Michelle offered to attend HHIA's January Business Meeting, scheduled for January 25--two days before the next park meeting--if desired by HHIA. We understand that the

proposed park concept may not be everything we might wish it to be, but also recognize the difficulty of creating a park that satisfies the needs and desires of all users. Norma was receptive to our interest in opening all park areas for use during Phase 1 of the park, while the upper areas are experiencing landfill settlement, and seeking to open walk-in access to the park from Hacienda Heights.” (Jeff Yann, personal communication description of meeting)

It is important that all interested community members attend the next meeting on Jan. 27, 2016 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Don Julian Elementary School located at 13855 Don Julian Rd. in La Puente. This will be a scoping meeting at which residents can express their concerns and what they desire in the park. The notice of preparation of an Environmental Impact Report was filed on Dec. 18, 2015 to start the formal environmental process.

Hacienda Blvd Enhancement Project

The County has begun the Hacienda Blvd enhancement project. This will consist of The County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works is pleased to inform you of an upcoming landscape improvement project in your neighborhood.

Work has begun on Hacienda Boulevard from Three Palms Street to Halliburton Road in the The project, which will be built at no cost to the adjacent property owners, will consist of planting vines, installation of irrigation systems, and sidewalk repairs. The work will be performed by Martinez Landscaping Co., Inc., and is expected to take about 3 months to complete.

Traffic impact on Hacienda Blvd should be minimal. The project Specifications allow the contractor to implement traffic control daily from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, closing one lane in each direction (reducing traffic to two lanes each way). Generally the contractor will not need to close a lane in each direction concurrently, therefore they have agreed to arrange work such that lane closures will be avoided during their peak hour, as much as practical. They will also monitor traffic daily and take any other necessary measures to minimize traffic impact, especially as they approach the Holidays.

During construction, parking may be restricted and traffic will be delayed by large equipment and the delivery of materials to the job site. Temporary "NO PARKING" signs will be posted along the construction route at least 1 day prior to the arrival of the work crew to your area. Construction working hours are between 7 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Hacienda Boulevard will maintain the existing traffic lanes prior to 8:30 a.m. and after 3:30 p.m., and may be reduced to two traffic lanes in each direction at all other times. Access to adjacent properties and businesses will be maintained by the contractor except for short periods of time when it is impractical to do so. Please observe all traffic controls, parking restrictions, and flagmen; exercise caution while in the vicinity of all construction activities.

Throughout construction, Public Works will have **Mr. Samir Malki**, Construction Supervisor, in charge of the project. He may be contacted at **(626) 458-4993**, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., for any questions or concerns that you may have about this project. Refer to **Project ID RDC0015925, Hacienda Boulevard-Three Palms Street/Halliburton Road.**

We apologize in advance for any inconvenience the construction may cause. Thank you for your patience, cooperation, and understanding during the construction of this project. We hope that upon completion of this project, you will find it to be a great improvement to your community.