



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Large California Oil Spill Highlights Lack of Oversight and Dangers of Oil Drilling**

**MCKITTRICK, CA**—Yesterday, Governor Gavin Newsom visited Chevron’s Cymric oilfield, the site of one of the largest oil spills in California’s history, where 974,400 gallons of a hazardous mixture of petroleum and water has flowed to the surface over the past two months into a nearby creek bed near the town of McKittrick.

Last Friday, [KQED](#) uncovered the seepage caused by Chevron, occurring approximately 35 miles west of Bakersfield in south Kern County. Chevron reported that the initial leak began on May 10th, after its crews tried to seal off a damaged and abandoned well. Chevron employs an extreme extraction technique called steam injection at this site. Earlier this year, DOGGR adopted weaker restrictions on the practice.

The company says efforts to confirm the source of the original leak and shut it down resulted in higher flows of fluid in the weeks after the initial release was discovered. According to California’s Department of Conservation, the flow has ceased. However, Chevron has reported increased amounts this week, as much as 120,000 gallons more than reports from last week. Despite the continued seepage, Chevron said Monday that it plans to appeal a state-mandated [order](#) to stop the spill and prevent future occurrences.

“We applaud the Governor for coming to see the McKittrick spill, which shows that both the regulated industry and regulators are not meeting their responsibility to protect public health and the environment,” said **Cesar Aguirre, Central California Environmental Justice Network Organizer and VISIÓN member**. “Even after the Governor requested that action be taken immediately, the spill continued. We have seen a similar situation in [Nelson Court](#), where families are still dealing with the ramifications of a leaking gas pipe. CCEJN would like to invite the Governor on a tour through Kern County to see how this industry devastates the health of communities. Once he sees the impacts of this industry, we hope he will take action by committing to passing AB 345, a health protective bill that would require all new oil & gas development to be no less than 2,500 feet away from our communities.”

Both CRPE and VISIÓN are co-sponsors of AB 345 (Muratsuchi) and support communities in the San Joaquin Valley, where the oil and gas industry is responsible for 30-60% of the [toxic air contaminants](#). “**VISIÓN** wants to make clear that we are not trying to end oil and gas operations, we are demanding that it be done from a safe distance from sensitive land uses, like homes and schools,” said **Senior Policy Advocate Alvaro Palacios Casanova**. “For an industry that claims it is the most regulated in the world, it

sure lacks credibility when you look at its track record. It is why AB 345 is necessary to protect communities from catastrophic spills and chemical releases.”

In yesterday’s media advisory restricted to press and Chevron representatives, Governor Newsom pledged to continue his work reforming the agency responsible for regulating the oil & gas industry in California, the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR). Newsom recently fired the head of the agency, as well as some supervisors tasked with regulating the industry who owned shares in major oil companies, after discovering fracking permits had increased during his time in office without his knowledge. Governor Newsom stated he doesn’t believe he has the legal authority to act alone on limiting the expansion of dangerous drilling in California, but VISIÓN believes there is more the Governor can do right now.

“VISIÓN appreciates the Governor’s steps to protect people’s water in the San Joaquin Valley and his commitment to change DOGGR. However, big strides need to be taken by the California legislature and Governor Newsom to protect communities from an ongoing health crisis associated with dangerous drilling in neighborhoods,” said **Juan Flores, CRPE Organizer and VISIÓN**. “It is time to pass AB 345.”

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***Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment (CRPE)** is an environmental justice organization providing legal, organizing, and technical assistance to grassroots groups in low-income communities and communities of color. Our mission is to achieve environmental justice and healthy, sustainable communities through collective action and the law. Find out more about our work at [crpe-ej.org](http://crpe-ej.org).*

***Voices in Solidarity against Oil in Neighborhoods (VISIÓN)** is a statewide coalition led by groups organizing on the frontlines of oil extraction in California, working with communities in Kern and Los Angeles Counties directly impacted by oil and gas extraction. We are leading efforts in California for health and safety protections from oil and gas operations.*