



MIDWAY DRILLER

SERVING TAFT AND THE WESTSIDE COMMUNITIES SINCE 1910

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Quail walk along the top of a wall at the West Kern Oil Museum under 100 degree heat last weekend. After a brief cool-down and even a little bit of rain, triple-digit heat has returned and is in the forecast through the weekend.

Photo by Doug Keeler/Midway Driller

Covid increasing rapidly in county

Kern County's Covid-19 case rate has grown significantly in the past week.

In fact, it has more than doubled from 2.5 per 100,000 people to 6.6 per 100,000 people, Kern County Public Health Director Brynn Carrigan told the Board of Supervisors Tuesday morning.

It is a very concerning trend, Carrigan said. "Last week, I reported that we are starting to see some slight increases in our COVID rates here in Kern County. Unfortunately, that increase is starting to happen at a more rapid pace," she said.

Hospitalizations are on the increase, too. Last week, 59 people were in the hospital and this week there are 89, including 15 in intensive care units, Carrigan said.

Nine new Covid-19 cases were reported in the Taft area this week by the Kern County Health Department.

That raises Taft's total to 1,812, an increase of 16 in the past week.

So far, 1,754 people living in the 93268 zip code have recovered, the health department said.

Kern County added 305 new cases since Friday and two more people have died from the coronavirus, raising the county death total to 1,419.

To date, 112,623 Kern County residents have been infected with Covid-19, according to the health department website.

The health department is still reporting just six known cases of the Delta variant, a strain of Covid-19 being blamed for widespread increases in infections and hospitalizations in the United States.

Competing studies on battle over California oil

By John Cox
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A battle for public opinion is heating up as the struggle for Kern County's oil industry becomes more and more a political matter.

Recently released studies and informational campaigns focus on the perceived good and bad aspects of California oil and gas production. Perhaps not coincidentally, the arguments being made center on many of the same topics under discussion in Sacramento.

On the anti-oil side, the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity published a study earlier this month concluding crude produced in California has become more carbon-intensive, and a bigger contributor of greenhouse gases, than imported oil.

Pro-oil messaging followed shortly afterward: The Kern Economic Development Corp. put out a two-page graphic highlighting the unseen environmental and human rights costs of California's growing dependence on imported oil. Within days, a news release from the nation's top industry organization underscored the economic benefits of in-state petroleum production.

Lobbying and marketing campaigns have long been features of California's oil industry. And as climate change seizes public attention, environmental advocacy organizations have worked for years to reshape the debate about what petroleum means to the Golden State.

But now more than ever, efforts to sway public opinion have become a focus of activism on both sides. Just as environmentalists make the case oil production is to blame for climate change and public health and safety risks, the industry is trying to persuade Californians it is more scapegoat than villain.

KEDC RELEASE

Politicians in Kern County, the heart of California oil production, argue that Gov. Gavin Newsom's efforts to restrict and ultimately phase out in-state oil production make no sense economically. They say California has some of the world's strictest regulations on oil field activity and that efforts to scale back domestic production lead to greater imports from countries with worse environmental and human rights records.

That perspective came through in KEDC's graphic. Noting almost three-quarters of California's energy comes from fossil

fuels, it said the state produces less than a third of the oil it consumes.

Because no pipelines bring oil to California, it said, the state gets much of its crude from tankers, the largest of which emit more than 11 tons of carbon dioxide per day. These ships are responsible for about an eighth of the world's marine emissions of carbon dioxide, it said.

The graphic, funded by KEDC and shared via email and social media, points out that the top sources of California's foreign oil in 2019 — Saudi Arabia, Ecuador, Iraq, Colombia and Nigeria — score far below the United States in international rankings related to environmental health, labor and human rights.

CBD'S REPORT

The Center for Biological Diversity's report makes different points, including information to rebut the assertion that importing oil contributes more pollution than crude produced in California. But like the KEDC report, it avoids certain, arguably relevant topics.

Using carbon-intensity values provided by the California Air Resources Board, the CBD study said oil produced in California has become heavier in carbon than most of the state's imported oils, such that it threatens to cancel out the climate benefits of California's gradually declining production totals.

The overall carbon intensity of California's oil has increased 22 percent since 2019, it said. During the same period, it said oils imported to the state and refined in California rose an average of only 8 percent.

Because of that, the organization argues that now is the time for California to accelerate its phaseout of in-state oil production and ban certain energy-intensive methods of crude extraction.

"Nowhere in the world is better suited than California, with its wealthy, diverse economy and vibrant clean energy sector, to lead the way in a rapid phaseout of oil and gas extraction," according to the study.

HEAVY, LIGHT

By industry standards, it said, 68 percent of oil produced in the state was classified in 2018 as being heavy, which is associated with greater greenhouse gas emissions and more energy-intensive extraction methods. By comparison, oil brought in from other states, including by tanker, were all classified as light oil. At

13 percent of California's refined total that year, those oils accounted for about half of the total produced in the state.

CBD's study found that the only significant source of heavy oil imported to California and refined in the state came from South America and constituted 22 percent of the Golden State's supply in 2019. Canada and Mexico also sold heavy oil to California that year, CBD noted, but their crude amounted to just 5 percent of the state's refined total in 2018.

Unlike the KEDC graphic, CBD's report made no attempt to gauge the environmental, labor and human rights standards of countries from which California imports oil. Instead, it called the industry's assertions about the potential risks of shifting production overseas "morally reprehensible" and pointed to several of California's own oil-related regulatory failings.

The CBD's senior scientist, John Fleming, asserted in an email that California cutting in-state oil production won't lead to an increase in imports because laws and policies already on the books will bring about a decline in consumption greater than the decline in production.

"Because of this existing trend," he wrote, "there would be no need to import more oil to replace lost production because the demand for that production would no longer be here."

API'S TAKE

A news release Wednesday by the American Petroleum Institute trade group provided a very different view. Using results from a study it commissioned from professional services firm PricewaterhouseCoopers, it said California oil and gas in 2019 supported more than 1 million jobs, 84 percent of them direct and the rest indirect.

It said industry activity in the state generated \$199 billion in 2019, or 6.4 percent of California's gross domestic product that year. It added that the U.S. Energy Information Administration expects global oil and liquid fuels consumption to surpass 2019 levels in 2022.

"This study reinforces that California's economic outlook is brighter when we are leading the world in energy production," API President and CEO Mike Sommers said in the release, "and it serves as a reminder of what's at stake if policymakers restrict access to affordable, reliable energy and make us more dependent on foreign sources."

Oil Tech hosting annual barbecue

The 2021 Taft Union High School Oil Technology Academy's annual Kick-off Barbecue and program is coming up on Aug. 30.

This year's keynote speaker will be new Taft Union High School Superintendent Dr. Jason Hodgson.

Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. and the program starts at 7 pm.

The barbecue is held at the West Kern Oil Museum, 1168 Wood St.

At this time this is an outside event and there will be no Covid restrictions, organizers said.

Students, Taft High staff, mentors, business partners, string board and friends of the academy are invited. This is a family event. The barbecue is co hosted by General Production Services (GPS) and Holmes Western Oil Corporation.

Meghan Clark joins Midway Driller staff



Meghan Clark

There's a new face at the Taft Midway Driller.

Meghan Clark has joined the Driller team as our new advertising representative.

Clark, 30, is a life-long Taft resident and graduated from Taft Union High School.

She has a broad variety of experience working in customer

service at many Taft businesses and was the deli manager at Albertsons.

Clark describes herself as "a huge people person."

"I've always worked in customer service and making people happy," she says.

Meghan has been married for eight years to her husband Juan, and has two children -- a daughter Alyssadii, 10, and son Sabastian, 8.

She's happy in her new position.

"I really like working at the Taft Midway Driller because its a great opportunity to meet new people...all my co workers have been nothing but welcoming and really helpful," she said.. "Im really excited for this new opportunity and getting to know all the local business owners/workers."



STARTING THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2021

West Side Family Health Care will open at

7:00 am Monday - Friday

Holiday and weekend hours will remain 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

NEW HOURS



West Side Family Health

100 E. North St. Taft, CA 92368

661-765-1935 • WSHCD.org

