



# Enforcement News

## **\$2.5 Million Settlement Reached with Regional Water Board for 2015 Oil Spill in Santa Barbara County** *Settlement agreement is one part of \$60 million settlement*

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**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY** – A \$2.5 million settlement has been reached between Plains Pipeline, L.P., and the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board as part of an over \$60 million state and federal multi-agency settlement for a pipe failure in 2015 that discharged crude-oil near Refugio State Beach in Santa Barbara County.

The settlement requires the company to pay penalties, natural resource damages and assessment costs, and response costs. It also requires improvements to its nationwide pipeline system that bring it into compliance with federal and state pipeline safety laws.

“The 2015 oil spill had a devastating impact on our region’s coastline and wildlife,” said Dr. Jean-Pierre Wolff, chair of the Central Coast Water Board. “We take oil spills and the impact on our coastlines and wildlife very seriously. This lengthy settlement process demonstrates our commitment to collaborate with federal and state governments, and dischargers, to protect and restore our region’s waters.”

On May 19, 2015 a pipeline owned and operated by Plains Pipeline, L.P., a wholly owned subsidiary of Plains All American Pipeline, L.P., failed and discharged approximately 2,934 barrels of heavy crude-oil near Refugio State Beach in Santa Barbara County. The oil spill caused the oiling of the Pacific Ocean and other shorelines and beaches resulting in beach and fishing closures and adverse impacts to natural resources such as birds, fish, marine mammals, and shoreline and subtidal habitat.

On July 30, 2015, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board requested assistance from the California Office of the Attorney General to pursue civil liability and injunctive relief against Plains to resolve California Water Code violations caused by the oil spill. A settlement was reached and a consent decree was entered as a final judgment in federal district court on October 14, 2020.

As part of the over \$60 million multi-agency settlement, the company will pay \$24 million in penalties, of which the statutory maximum penalty of \$2.5 million will be paid to the State Water Pollution Cleanup and Abatement Account.





Plains will also pay approximately \$22.3 million in natural resource damages that will be used to fund projects to restore wildlife, and habitat injured, lost, or destroyed as a result of the oil spill and to compensate the public for the impacts to recreation; \$10 million to reimburse natural resource damage assessment costs; and \$4.26 million to reimburse U.S. Coast Guard clean-up costs.

The [Central Coast Water Board](#) is a California state agency responsible for protecting and restoring water quality in a 300-mile-long coastal region, from southern San Mateo and Santa Clara counties to the northern part of Ventura County.

For copies of the final signed settlement agreement, contact Thea Tryon at [Thea.Tryon@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Thea.Tryon@waterboards.ca.gov). Visit the [State Water Board Twitter page @CaWaterBoards](#).