MINUTE ITEM
This Calendar Item No. C65
was approved as Minute Item
No. 65 by the State Lands
Commission by a vote of 3
to 0 at its 09/03/99
meeting.

CALENDAR ITEM
C65

A 35

S 18

09/03/99
W 40654
K. Walker
M. Valentine
A. Willard

AUTHORIZE STAFF TO SUPERVISE AN OFFSHORE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY ON STATE TIDE AND SUBMERGED LANDS AT EACH OF THE CHEVRON 4H PLATFORM SITES SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

APPLICANT:
California State Lands Commission

AREA, TYPE LAND AND LOCATION:
State tide and submerged lands offshore of Santa Barbara County

LAND USE:
Drill core holes to characterize the structure and contents of the shell mounds remaining at the sites of four removed oil platforms Hilda, Heidi, Hazel and Holly.

TERM OF PERMIT:
One year.

PROPOSED PROJECT:
The Commission is requested to allow staff to authorize Chevron to proceed with drilling and analyzing core holes from each of the shell mounds remaining on the sites of four removed oil platforms in the Santa Barbara Channel.

Chevron applied for the removal of four oil drilling and production platforms off the Santa Barbara coast in 1992, and the State Lands Commission, acting as Lead Agency, prepared and circulated a Mitigated Negative Declaration in May of 1994. The Commission adopted the document and granted permission to begin removal in August of that same year. The four platforms were actually removed in the summer of 1996, with debris clearance being completed during October and November of 1996.

During the life of the platforms mounds built up under each one. These mounds consist of drilling fluids (muds) and cuttings covered and possibly inter-layered

with shells. The shell layer was created through periodic cleaning of marine life from the platform legs and the natural sloughing of organisms from the structures. The shells have chemically bonded to each other so that the surface of the mounds is now consolidated and rough. One of the conditions established for the removal project was that these mounds be made "trawlable", so in early 1997 several tests trawls were made at each platform site, all of which were unsuccessful. Studies are now being proposed to determine whether it is feasible to remove the mounds entirely and, if so, what general types of environmental impacts would be associated with different removal methods. When these studies are complete, the information will be provided to the Commission with recommendations for further action.

The four mounds range in height from 6.7 meters (22 feet) to 8.5 meters (28 feet), and from 60 meters (197 feet) to 82 meters (269 feet) across. They lie in water depths ranging from 31 meters (100 feet) to 43 meters (140 feet). The outer covering of the mounds consists of strongly cemented mussel shells and shell fragments of unknown thickness. It is tentatively planned to drill three to five cores on each mound to determine the thickness of the shell cover, internal make-up of the mounds and the whether any contaminants are present within the mounds.

The cores will be drilled from a drill barge held in place by anchors. The holes will be drilled using standard rotary drill techniques, with all drilling fluids and cuttings returned to the barge.

PREREQUISITE CONDITIONS, FEES AND EXPENSES:

As the information from the cores is being gathered at the Commission's direction, no fees will be charged.

STATUTORY AND OTHER REFERENCES:

14 Cal Code Regs. 15306

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

Pursuant to the Commission's delegation of authority and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. 15061), the staff has determined that this activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 6, Information Collection, established for projects to gather information where minimal or no disturbance of State lands is involved, 2 Cal. Code Regs. 2905 (e)(3).

Authority: PRC 21084 and 14 Cal Code Regs. 15300, and 2 Cal Code Regs. 2905.

EXHIBIT:

Exhibit A. Project Location and Site Map

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMISSION:

1. FIND THAT THE ACTIVITY IS EXEMPT FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF CEQA PURSUANT TO 14 CAL. CODE REGS. 15061 AS A CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT PROJECT, CLASS 6, INFORMATION COLLECTION, 2 CAL. CODE REGS. 2905(e)(3).

2. AUTHORIZE COMMISSION STAFF TO ALLOW CHEVRON U.S.A., Inc., TO PROCEED, UNDER STAFF SUPERVISION, WITH CORE DRILLING OPERATIONS AT THE FOUR SHELL MOUNDS ON TIDE AND SUBMERGED LANDS OFFSHORE OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1, 1999 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1, 2000.

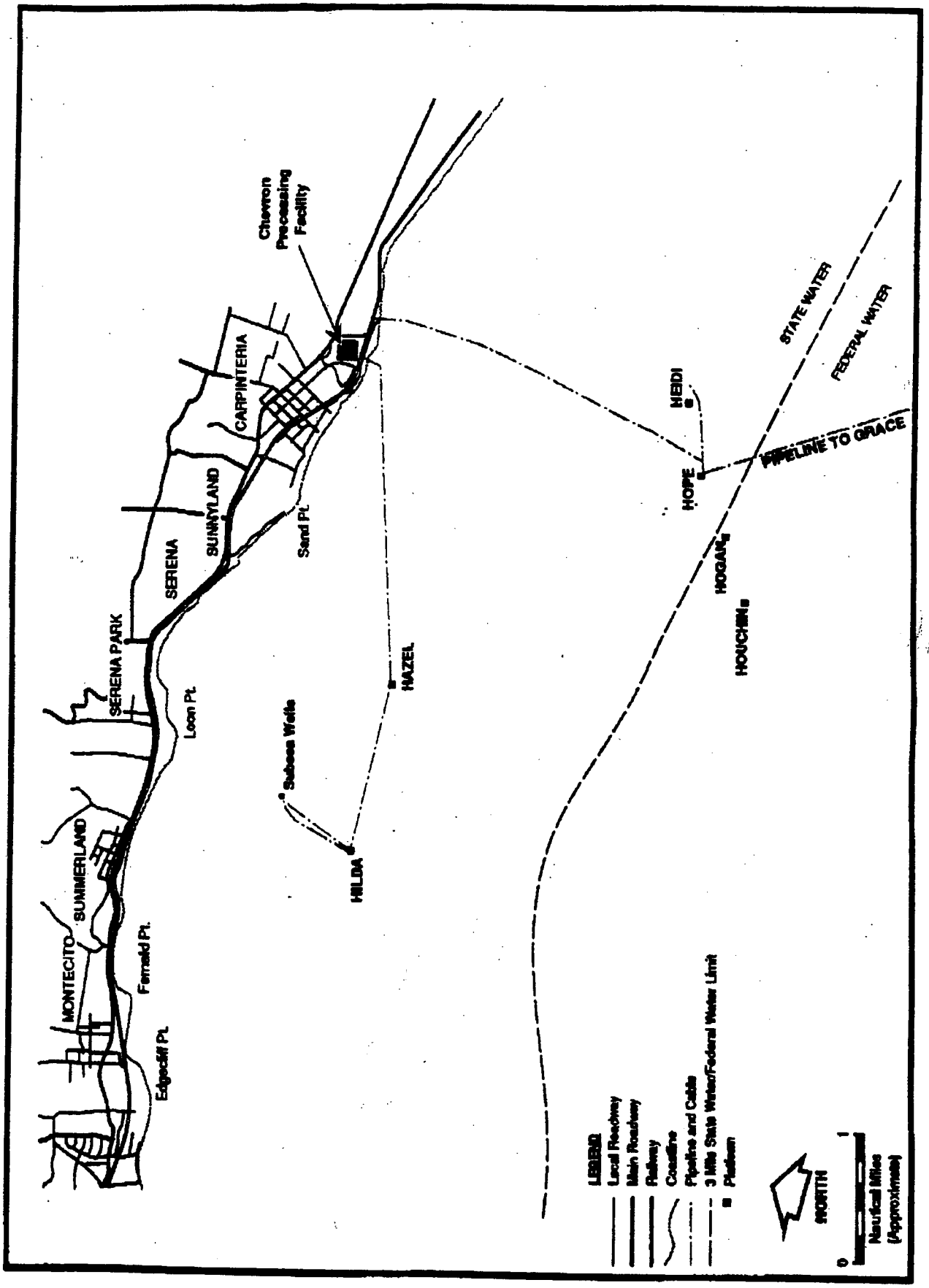

FIGURE 1

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