



GREEN ZONE

OIL IS THE 'GIFT' THAT KEEPS  
ON GIVING, POLLUTING AN  
AREA CONTINUOUSLY...





# Drill Baby, Drill?

## Not if Jack Eidt Has Anything to Say About It

By Taylor Van Arsdale  
Photos by: Bob Blackwell

Environmentalist Jack Eidt's a man on many missions. His first (back in 2004) was Rancho Mission Viejo ("RMV") and the plight to save one of the last undeveloped watersheds in California—the San Mateo Creek watershed. When the threat of large-scale development (14,000 homes) jeopardized this wilderness stretch, it prompted Eidt to form Wild Heritage Planners ("WHP") with partners Jerry Collamer and Pete Van Nuys to "collaborate with government, industry, and stakeholders as urban planners, transportation advocates, and sustainability advisors." His most recent venture: the controversy and misinformation surrounding renewed interest in offshore drilling of the Santa Barbara coast.

An avid hiker and vegetarian, Eidt has long had a passion for protecting wilderness as well as success in getting people to see things from "a different perspective." In the RMV case, WHP came up with a land use plan—a compromise between the Sierra Club's interest in protecting the land and RMV's company's interest in building homes—along with alternatives to avoid the existing San Onofre Beach Park (Trestles Beach). A toll road extension (stretching through that back country) was also proposed, which Eidt argued was unnecessary. That proposed alignment went to the coastal commission and was denied 8:2 in 2008. "The Transportation Corridor agencies tried to repeal it to the commerce department, but it never went through," Eidt said. He modestly attributes their success at the first hearing to the fact that there were, "4000 people who showed up to support 'Save Trestles' largely due to the efforts of the Sierra Club, the Surf Rider Coalition, and the surf community."





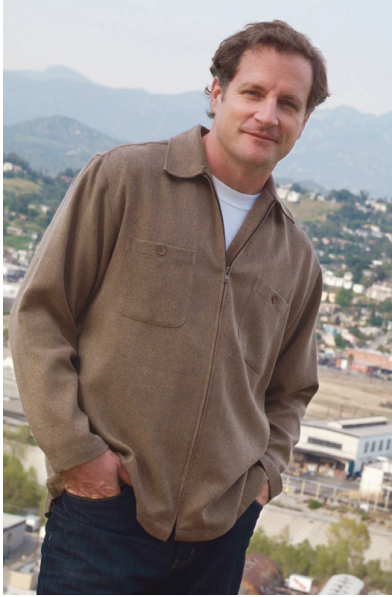


PHOTO COURTESY OF JACK EIDT

IT SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD DEAL UNTIL YOU REALIZE THAT THE END DATES ARE NOT TECHNICALLY ENFORCEABLE, PXP ONLY CONTROLS ONE OF THE FOUR PLATFORMS THAT THEY CLAIM TO BE DECOMMISSIONING (IRENE), THE LAND TITLES ARE NOT CLEAR AND DONATIONS ARE NOT GUARANTEED.

## Jack Eidt

During our conversation, Eidt references obscure facts and figures, legal jargon and statistics relating to all things environmental as easily as you or I might recall what we ate for breakfast. He sifts through mountains of paperwork to discern those nuances in lengthy legal proposals that may ultimately endanger our ecosystems, making it easy for the rest of us to understand the bottom line. Then he comes up with sustainable solutions to problems that are not being discussed by developers and governmental agencies. He does all this voluntarily, rarely getting paid for his work.

WHP works in conjunction with environmental groups and sometimes, in the case of the drilling issue in Santa Barbara, against them. Eidt, who received his Masters in Urban Planning (UCLA) and his undergraduate Environmental Studies (UCSB) said, "One of the first issues, an environmental studies major at UCSB gets involved in, is offshore drilling. The community is not happy about all the talk. For years environmental groups have been saying, 'no' to the oil companies and the state coastal sanctuary (stretching from the beach to three miles into the coast) has been off limits to new drilling. Back in 1969 there was an oil spill in the Santa Barbara channel. Thousands of birds were killed, beaches were coated with thick layers of oil." Admittedly, the government's clean up techniques are better than they were in the 60s but there's still a huge cost to our eco-system. "If we look at Prince William Sound and Exxon's Valdez spill—these areas will never be the same. Oil is the 'gift' that keeps on giving, polluting an area continuously," Eidt lamented.

With respect to Santa Barbara, there are natural oil seeps off its coast. "When we'd go surfing," Eidt explained, "We'd call it Black Wave Syndrome ... little oil slicks in certain areas. But it's not usable crude. It requires a lot of processing and has not been financially viable...until recently."

The interest was sparked in April 2008 when Plains Exploration Petroleum ("PXP") agreed to donate 200 acres of land on the Gaviota coast and also the long fought over eco-area—the Burton Mesa—to the Trust for Public Land effectively allowing environmentalists to manage it. In exchange, PXP agreed to cease all oil production operations by 2022. Some of these operations would be taken down by 2017, undoing the Gaviota processing plant, as well as the Lompoc processing plant and would take four of their oil platforms out of commission as well.

PHOTO BY KEN KURTIS











The Environmental Defense Center ("EDC") the lead environmental group along with Get Oil Out ("GOO"—which has existed since 1969) negotiated a deal with the oil companies that would allow them to drill from an existing platform into the sanctuary. It is unprecedented; a landmark deal. Never have environmentalists and oil companies been able to get together and agree on a way to end offshore oil drilling.

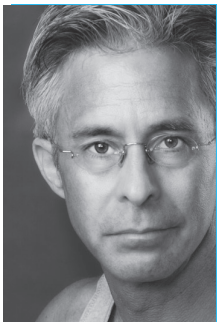
But Eidt doesn't like this deal. He doesn't like it at all. He acknowledges that there are some 'positive aspects' such as the, "lure of 1.5 million dollars (donated by PXP) to: buy hybrid buses for SB County, to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, and give sizeable bumps to local and state governments, but there are significant and crucial negative points that need to be explained. The most obvious is that once a precedent is established, any oil company simply has to pay some money, do some mitigation and they can get their way."

Currently there are four oil platforms in the southwest area near Point Argueyo and Gaviota that are in question, the main one being Platform Irene. The Mineral Management Service ("MMS"), which oversees offshore drilling, would have sole discretion as to determining when these platforms are taken out of service. "Oil companies are statutorily required to take out every drop of oil and gas from platforms already in existence. It sounds like a good deal until you realize that the end dates are not technically enforceable, PXP only controls one of the four platforms that they claim to be decommissioning (Irene), the land titles are not clear and donations are not guaranteed. And the worst issue is that all this would be granted in exchange for the first new lease in the State Coastal Sanctuary since 1969," Eidt clarified.

Eidt believes this proposal (if passed) will increase oil drilling in Santa Barbara significantly. "With 35 additional leases that have the potential to go forward, it's a scary prospect," Eidt said. "But I see why certain groups are hungry to go ahead with the deal."

The bigger question: Is there a nexus between oil development and land donation? "It's a great thing to protect the Gaviota beach but the state doesn't have all the information." And added Eidt, "Lt. Governor John Garamendi and Controller Chiang, who voted against the deal are cognizant of their political futures and know it wouldn't bode well for their state wide ambitions [Garamendi plans on running for Governor in 2010] to allow the first offshore oil drilling in over 40 years." We haven't heard the end of the PXP deal. "That's why the State Lands Commission voted the project down in January. PXP/EDC are planning to apply again [within two months], so we're telling them no ... again." *Translation: we're not quite out of the water just yet.*

For more info visit: [www.wildheritageplanners.com](http://www.wildheritageplanners.com) or [www.votethecoast.org](http://www.votethecoast.org)



Bob Blackwell is commercial photographer specializing in portraiture and architecture. His personal work questions the forces of conflict and injustice and asks viewers to do the same by presenting the question through images based on symbols from both current and historical sources. Is there ever a time when killing is the right thing to do? Are man and nature really forces in opposition to one another? His past projects include "Structures of God and Man"—which looks at the interplay of man and nature, and "The Fourth Horseman"—which looks at the necessity of conflict through the prism of the Iraq War. Blackwell is currently working on "TARP", a project that looks at the rape of the US Treasury and the consequences and burden to the average citizen. His work is sold as fine art prints and he is available for both commercial work and to business groups for speaking engagements.

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