

OFFICE OF THE  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

**JOYCE E. DUDLEY**  
District Attorney



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*Joyce E. Dudley*

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**\*\*\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\***

**Re: *People v. Plains All-American Pipeline, L.P. Sentencing on Felony Conviction***

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley today announced the sentencing of Plains All American Pipeline, L.P. (Plains) for the 2015 Refugio Oil Spill in Santa Barbara County, California. Plains was sentenced to pay over \$3.347 million in fines and penalty assessments. While the Court made findings including that Plains knew or should have known their pipeline would rupture, stating that “[i]t was not a matter of if, but a matter of when,” Judge Herman denied the People’s request to impose probation and for a significantly larger fine. The Court retained jurisdiction over restitution for victims, and the next hearing on that issue will be held on July 10, 2019.

“This assault on our community,” said District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley, “correctly resulted in a historic felony conviction as a result of the Herculean efforts of Deputy District Attorney Kevin Weichbrod and the extraordinary team of Deputy Attorney Generals led by Brett Morris. Still, without the insight, fortitude and hard work of our jury, this success could have evaded our community.”

On May 19, 2015, a highly-pressurized pipeline operated by Plains to transport crude oil ruptured onshore just north of Refugio State Beach in Santa Barbara County, California. Evidence presented at trial demonstrated that over 140,000 gallons of crude oil were released from the pipeline, spilling crude oil into the Pacific Ocean and spreading across coastal beaches. At trial, testimony revealed that over 100,000 gallons of crude oil were never recovered. Local, state and federal agencies led efforts to protect natural habitats and to try to address the residual hazardous materials remaining along the coast.

On September 7, 2018, a Santa Barbara County jury returned a verdict finding Plains guilty of failing to properly maintain its dangerous, highly-pressurized pipeline, which led to the discharge of crude oil into the Pacific Ocean, a felony. Plains was also found guilty of eight misdemeanor charges including one count of failing to follow its own oil spill plan and notify emergency response agencies, six counts of killing marine mammals, protected sea birds, and other marine life, and one count of violating a county ordinance prohibiting oil spills.

These guilty verdicts and this Court’s sentence result from a tireless investigation by the California Department of Justice; the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Office of Spill Prevention and Response; and multiple members of the Santa Barbara County District Attorney’s Office.

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