



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 15, 2021

CONTACT:
Christopher Sproul
Partner & Lead Counsel
Environmental Advocates
csproul@enviroadvocates.com

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS SETTLE LAWSUIT WITH SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON TO PROTECT WATERWAYS FROM TOXIC POLLUTION

Santa Barbara, CA—Today, a coalition of environmental groups announced that they reached a settlement agreement with Southern California Edison (Edison) to clean up facilities identified as sources of toxic contaminants that flow into streams, rivers, and other waterways.

On June 8, 2020, the Ecological Rights Foundation and Santa Barbara Channelkeeper filed a lawsuit against Edison alleging that the company operated 27 facilities in its service region that served as storage and processing locations for wooden utility poles treated with the chemical pentachlorophenol but that lacked appropriate water quality protections.

Pentachlorophenol is a wood preservative used since the 1930s that contains substantial quantities of chemicals known as dioxins and furans, which are toxic to wildlife. Many countries have already banned its use because of its harmful effects on humans and the environment. Water quality monitoring results from Edison facilities demonstrated that significant quantities of these toxic chemicals wash into environmentally sensitive waterways during storm events.

The agreement, reached on November 9, commits Edison to the implementation of a comprehensive program to prevent contaminants from escaping its facilities. Over the course of the next seven years, Edison will execute a strategy to cover all areas where treated wood is stored or processed or it will contain, filter, or treat storm runoff from its properties to meet specific water quality targets that protect the environment. Edison is bound by the agreement to conduct monitoring to demonstrate that its methods satisfactorily eliminate pollutants from running off its facilities.

Edison has also agreed to mitigate for alleged historic damages to the environment by providing \$160,000 to a public-private partnership working to develop robust water quality protections for Areas of Special Biological Significance throughout the State of California.

This settlement agreement will result in environmental protections for over 60 waterways, beaches, and other natural resource areas, including the Goleta Slough State Marine Conservation Area near the City of Goleta and University of California, Santa Barbara. The Goleta Slough is a sensitive ecological preserve that serves as wildlife habitat for numerous rare, sensitive, and endangered species.

“Pentachlorophenol and its byproducts are highly toxic in aquatic environments such as the Goleta Slough. These storage and processing facilities are hotspots for this form of pollution and the agreement will help ensure that our waterways are better protected,” said Benjamin Pitterle, Science and Policy Director for Santa Barbara Channelkeeper.

For further information, please contact Christopher Sproul at Environmental Advocates (csproul@enviroadvocates.com), who served as lead counsel for Santa Barbara Channelkeeper.