

BENICIA HERALD

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MARCH 21, 2019

\$3 million settlement reached between community group and Valero Benicia Refinery

FEBRUARY 26, 2019 BY [EDITOR](#) — [3 COMMENTS](#)

Settlement package includes multiple air monitoring and water management projects

BENICIA – The Good Neighbor Steering Committee (GNSC), a well-known local environmental group, and the Valero Benicia Refinery have reached an agreement that requires Valero to spend up to three million dollars on air monitoring, water conservation, and other environmentally beneficial projects. Valero will fund local environmental non-profits and a City of Benicia water project. Valero will also install state-of-the-art fence line monitoring at its Benicia, California refinery.

This 2019 Agreement is the result of years of negotiations to resolve lingering issues from a prior settlement agreement. The 2019 Amendment to the Valero/ Good Neighbor Steering Committee Settlement Agreement redistributes funds that Valero was obligated to make available under a 2008 Agreement, which was entered into to settle a legal dispute about a planned refinery expansion. That agreement provided for \$1,000,000 for buffer land, and \$1,000,000 for watershed protection. The disposition of those funds has long been contested. The new terms result in an additional \$1 million in environmental benefits for the community.

GNSC has worked for years to negotiate a more productive use of the original funds and add to them. Valero and GNSC have agreed to use these greater funds for air monitoring, water conservation, and community environmental projects through Sustainable Solano, a local nonprofit. Air monitoring includes setting up community monitors that will be run by a new nonprofit, additional fence line monitoring system to the northwest of the refinery, and support for Airwatch Bay Area, a real time air monitoring data website. Water conservation funding provides for an Integrated Water Management Plan by the City of Benicia, and funding for initial projects. Funds are also provided for Sustainable Solano's Land and Water program, which will give Benicians the opportunity to replace water hungry lawns with drought-tolerant and edible landscaping; grey water and rain water harvesting will provide irrigation. The program will also provide job training for local youth in the installation of these systems.

The City of Benicia is the third party to this Agreement. The City Council approved the new Agreement terms at its meeting last night. Projects will begin immediately.

Marilyn Bardet, a founding GNSC member says, "Watch-dogging the refinery is an ethical responsibility the GNSC has taken seriously since 2000, in order to protect community health and safety. The new fence line monitors will detect refinery emissions. The community monitors will measure ambient air pollution whether it is from the refinery or other sources. The monitors will help folks in the region to know better what they are breathing. That is all great news for Benicia and beyond."

The group can be reached through its attorney, Dana Dean at (707) 747-5206 or by email at dana@danadean.com.



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Comments



Thomas Petersen says

FEBRUARY 26, 2019 AT 12:16 PM

Excellent outcome on this. Kudos to all involved.

[Reply](#)



Paul winders says

FEBRUARY 26, 2019 AT 7:44 PM

Does this plan pay for independent private air quality monitoring ? Do the citizens have access. To real time monitoring to Valero's fence line monitors ?

[Reply](#)



MaryFrances Kelly-Poh says

FEBRUARY 26, 2019 AT 8:05 PM

Valero has a website set up where citizens can look. Ultimately the results of monitors which will be owned by BCAMP (Benicia Community Air Monitoring Program) will be on AirWatch Bay Area. The data will go to Carniegh Mellon University to be scraped and then post on Air Watch Bay Area which is currently up and running without Benicia data. Many changes will be coming about as the result of this settlement agreement. Watch for more information coming forth.

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