

Homeowners file first in series of lawsuits against Crimson Pipeline over 2016 oil spill in Ventura



Gabriel Anderson, 13, photographs an oil spill behind a home in Ventura on June 23, 2016. He was with his father, Sean Anderson, a professor at Cal State Channel Islands, who was collecting samples to test for toxicity. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times)

By HANNAH FRY
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A Ventura couple has filed a lawsuit against Crimson Pipeline LLC alleging the company failed to clean up oil from a 2016 spill that sent gallons of crude onto their property.

The lawsuit, filed Friday in Ventura County Superior Court, is the first in a series of eight complaints expected to be filed this week against the oil transportation company stemming from the [June 23 spill](#) that officials said sent roughly 30,000 gallons of crude oil into Prince Barranca, a dry arroyo more than a mile from the coast. The pipeline was shut down before the oil reached the ocean after a resident discovered the leak.

The oil spill transformed the once-serene neighborhood into a noisy, crowded work site during the cleanup process, according to the lawsuit.

“Residents stayed inside their homes with their doors shut and their windows closed. They didn’t use their yards. They canceled events at their homes with family and friends, but no one wanted to visit the neighborhood anyway because of the smell, crowds and noise,” the lawsuit states.

Residents Henning and Linda Ottsen say that though [Crimson Pipeline](#) quickly deployed contractors and promised to clean up the spill, crews left after a few months without finishing the job. The couple allege they are still waiting more than two years later for the oil in the backyard of their home on Grove Lane to be removed.

“They can’t use the property fully and how they would like to,” said Mark Hiepler, an attorney representing the homeowners. “This company sat in their front rooms on Day One and said they would return the canyon to a condition better than it was before the spill. The same oil company executives today have no plans to fulfill their promises and remove oil from this neighborhood.”

In a statement, Kendall Klingler, a spokesperson for Crimson Pipeline, said on Monday: “The cleanup, recovery and mitigation standards were determined by fed

Residents say the smell of oil still lingers in the area and is made worse by fog or other damp weather. The spill also affected some homeowners’ ability to sell or refinance their property because they would be forced to disclose the contaminant during the process, the lawsuit states.

It’s estimated that between 6,000 and 10,000 gallons of oil remain on private property in Prince Barranca, but it’s not clear how deeply it permeated the ground or how far it spread laterally, according to the lawsuit.

Hiepler said homeowners are suing in an effort to force Crimson Pipeline to restore the area or pay for a contractor to do the work. He estimates the cleanup likely would cost between \$8 million and \$14 million.

“They failed to clean up their mess and they haven’t kept their promises,” Hiepler said.

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