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Attorney General Bonta Files Lawsuit Against Chiquita Canyon Landfill to Force Accountability for Environmental Contamination

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LOS ANGELES — California Attorney General Rob Bonta today, alongside the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), filed a lawsuit against Waste Connections, and other owners and operators of the Chiquita Canyon Landfill, related to the ongoing subsurface elevated temperature event that is the source of persistent environmental contamination, including repeated releases of contaminated liquids known as leachate, which can have profound impacts to public health. Chiquita Canyon is a 639-acre landfill located in the Santa Clarita Valley in Los Angeles County that opened in 1972. Since at least May 2022, the subsurface elevated temperate event has caused odors, large volumes of leachate, and other environmental impacts resulting from the rapid breakdown of the waste mass in the landfill. During this time, Chiquita Canyon has

repeatedly and pervasively failed to manage hazardous waste at the landfill, in violation of state laws meant to protect people and the environment from hazards like the leachate being produced at the landfill. There has been consistent evidence of leaks, seeps, and spills of hazardous leachate and improper transport, treatment, and storage of hazardous materials. These failures are unlawful, have caused environmental harm, and threaten further environmental harm still. These violations, and the fact that they are continuing to happen, have led to today's lawsuit. This suit, which follows several important administrative and court enforcement actions from other state and federal agencies, seeks to address the continuing impacts of the subsurface elevated temperature event.

"Protecting the environment and safeguarding Californians requires quick and effective action from the Chiquita Canyon Landfill's owners and operators. For too long, the Chiquita Canyon Landfill has done the opposite, which has resulted in numerous spills of leachate and other violations of our state's hazardous waste laws. We cannot allow the California dream to be smothered by the repeated releases of hazardous waste at the Chiquita Canyon Landfill — we must act," **said Attorney General Rob Bonta.** "Other public agencies and residents have taken their own enforcement actions, and today my office is taking additional action to protect and defend the integrity of this region. Let there be no doubt, when owners and operators fail to do their part in protecting our water, soil, and air, my office will step in."

"Waste Connections has repeatedly, consistently and pervasively failed to lawfully manage hazardous waste at the Chiquita Canyon Landfill," **said California Environmental Protection Secretary Yana Garcia.** "This lawsuit makes it clear that California will continue to hold Waste Connections accountable for its actions."

“For the people who live near this facility, and for all Californians, Waste Connections must manage hazardous waste safely and in full compliance with the law, clean up existing contamination and prevent future harm,” **said DTSC Director Katherine Butler.** “Today’s action is another important step toward addressing the magnitude of impacts and sends a clear message that this kind of waste mismanagement has serious consequences.”

“For years, families living near Chiquita Canyon Landfill have endured dangerous conditions, toxic gasses, and serious impacts to their health and safety, while those responsible have repeatedly failed to protect our community. No company should be allowed to put its profits ahead of the health of our families or the safety of our community,” **said Assemblywoman Pilar Schiavo (D-Los Angeles).** “I want to thank Attorney General Bonta and the DTSC for taking this critical step to hold the landfill accountable and enforce the laws meant to protect us. We deserve real relief from this ongoing public health crisis, and thanks to the action being taken today and the years of endless dedication from the impacted families, we are one big step closer.”

What is Happening at the Chiquita Canyon Landfill?

The Chiquita Canyon Landfill is a 639-acre municipal solid waste disposal facility in Los Angeles County that is operated by Chiquita Canyon, LLC and its parent companies. The landfill stopped accepting waste on January 1, 2025, when it failed to obtain a permit from the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Water Board (Regional Water Board). The subsurface elevated temperatures at the landfill started in May 2022, and the affected area has expanded from 20 acres to at least 90 acres. The subsurface elevated temperatures beneath the landfill, which have exceeded 212 degrees Fahrenheit in places, and have reached as high as 260 degrees Fahrenheit, result from chemical reactions that release odors, toxic fumes, and cause other environmental and health impacts. The reaction also produces millions of gallons of leachate that must be pumped

out of the reaction area, collected, and disposed of properly as hazardous waste. The leachate has been found to contain benzene and, on occasion, methyl ethyl ketone, dangerous chemicals that can harm public health and the environment. On numerous occasions, the landfill has mismanaged the collection and removal of the leachate. For example, on November 14, 2025, the landfill spilled 8,000 gallons of hazardous leachate, which flowed into the landfill's eastern stormwater sedimentation basin (called the East Basin), an area that is not a permitted hazardous waste storage unit and not authorized to store or hold leachate. Increased rainfall in December 2025 resulted in an overtopping of the weir (a small dam) in the East Basin. As a result, on December 29 and 30, 2025, stormwater mixed with leachate was released to Castaic Creek, which flows into the Santa Clara River.

What's at Stake?

Several residential communities are near the landfill, including the Val Verde, Halsey Canyon, Halsey Hills, North Bluffs, Live Oak, and Williams Ranch communities. The nearest, the Val Verde community, is located approximately 1,000 feet northwest of the developed area of the landfill. Thousands of residents reside in these communities, and several schools are near the landfill, including two preschools, four elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. In November 2023, local, state, and federal agencies formed a Multi-Agency Critical Action Team, comprised of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), the Regional Water Board, CalRecycle, DTSC, South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), and various departments within the County of Los Angeles, among others. To date, there are several ongoing administrative and court enforcement actions stemming from the Multi-Agency Team's efforts to address the ever-increasing impacts of the subsurface elevated temperature event, including lawsuits filed

by Los Angeles County and SCAQMD. Residents have filed several individual and class-action lawsuits alongside efforts from local leaders to demand greater accountability and relief.

What's Next?

Today's lawsuit adds to these existing actions by bringing new claims against the landfill and generating additional momentum towards relief for the environmental and public health harm. In the lawsuit, DTSC bring claims against the landfill for violating multiple sections of the state Hazardous Waste Control Law relating to the management of hazardous waste, and the Attorney General alleges a claim for equitable relief under Government Code section 12607 to protect the natural resources of the state (including its air, water, and soil) from pollution, impairment, or destruction and a claim under Business and Professions Code section 17200, which prohibits businesses from profiting from various activities that constitute "unfair competition" under that law. The lawsuit seeks civil penalties, disgorgement, and injunctive and other equitable relief for these claims and violations, including an abatement fund to help address environmental pollution and ensure protection of the state's natural resources, which has and will continue to affect the nearby communities.

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