

Proposed oil tracts

board of supervisors, detailed how the county had tried unsuccessfully to block the lease sale. The selected tracts include several areas of critical environmental concern. Referring to the West Coast oil glut, Mr. Lyon urged, "We need to estimate how long it will last before trying to destroy other industries, such as tourism, fisheries and agriculture in an area where there is too much oil."

Mike Fergus of the Bureau of Land Management said the 1.3 million acres selected for study were from 8.4 million acres originally nominated by 27 oil companies. He explained that the Secretary of the Interior will make the final decision on which tracts to sell based on two documents: the Environmental Impact Statement and a Secretarial Issue Paper prepared by the bureau's Pacific office. This document will outline the issues and alternatives. The Secretary may take out tracts but may not add any, Mr. Fergus noted.

Even though the county opposed the leases, it has a study program under way to identify and plan for the on-shore impacts. The county program is called the Coastal Energy Impact Program.

Other speakers were more eloquent about the impacts. "The real resource in this area is the coastline itself," said Nelson Woolfe of Save Our Shoreline. He warned that low level seepage—something not to be studied—may be more dangerous to wildlife in the long run than catastrophic spills. "In the days of austere budgets, we need to streamline the process, but not at the risk of ignoring environmental risks," he said.

John Lapin of the same organization warned that oil production could lead to industrial development along the coast. "Do we want to see industrial development along the coast?" he asked. He also warned of increased air pollution, the possibility of large numbers of new workers, impacts on agriculture, and damage to the recreational resources on the coast. There

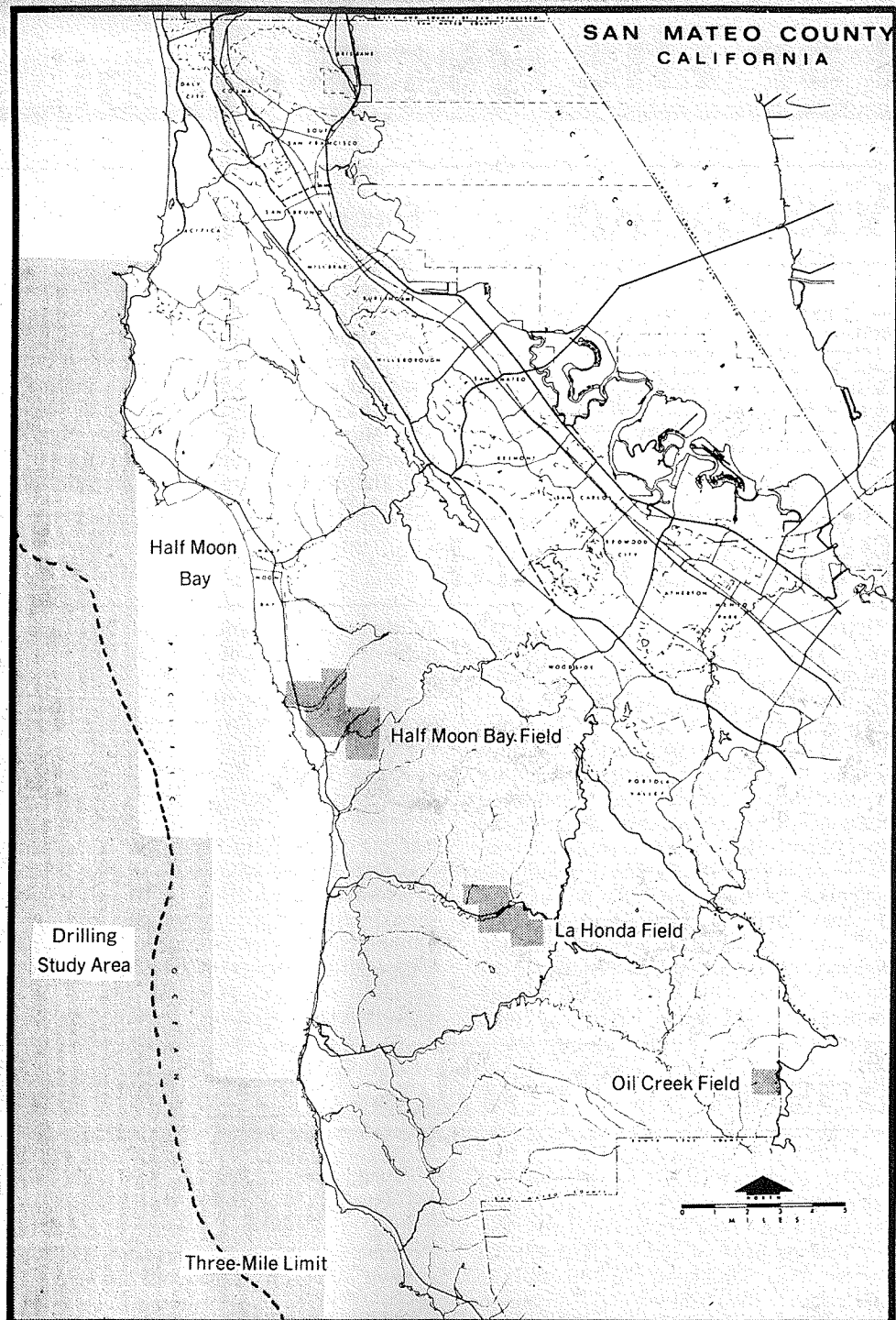
is a large public investment in beaches and parks, he noted.

"All this is problem solving," said Mr. Erickson. He deplored the emotional responses and said the problems must be solved if the program is to move forward in an orderly manner. He explained that many of the processes were largely automated and require few employees. They could be serviced by boat from a safe harbor rather than depending on the "hostile coastline" of San Mateo County. The on-shore facilities needed would depend on the size of the oil field discovered, Mr. Erickson said. These fields could range from 20 acres of on-shore storage for a small field of 20 million barrels to 45 acres for a 100 million barrel field.

Bill Ahern of the state Coastal Commission outlined some of the alternatives in the "planning game." All the drilling and even production can be done by ship, he said; however transfer of oil to ships is more risky than a marine terminal on shore. "The more times you handle the oil in a marine environment, the greater the risk of spill and the greater the air pollution," he said. He suggested the possibility of a pipeline to carry oil to the East Bay refineries—possibly "snaking" across Route 92 and under the Bay. Pipelines could also go to Davenport or Moss Landing or Pillar Point, he noted.

Mr. Lyon concluded his statement with a call for conservation as a means of delaying the need for the oil. Noting the U.S. Geological Survey estimates the county field at 100,000,000 barrels, he said, "If we reduced consumption of oil by five percent per day for 200-days, that oil would not be needed and could be saved for the time when available oil is insufficient."

By Marion Softky



San Mateo County oil production 1977: Half Moon Bay field [0 producing wells]; La Honda field [9 producing wells]; Oil Creek field [6 producing wells].



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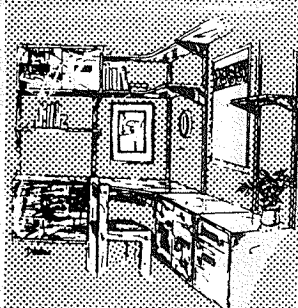
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