

Dear Members of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors,

As Contra Costa community, environmental, social justice, health, faith, labor, and political organizations, alongside statewide groups with significant membership in the county, we urge you to champion a vision for Contra Costa that looks beyond fossil fuels to a future that is safe and healthy for all of our residents. We write to ask your strong support for the following two-part proposal recently submitted to your body by the Contra Costa County Sustainability Commission:

- **In adherence to the established countywide Climate Action Plan (CAP) and in light of the ongoing General Plan and CAP update process, we recommend that the Board place an immediate moratorium on any further oil and gas permitting during the course of these updates.**
- **Subsequent to this moratorium, we propose that the updated General Plan include an explicit prohibition of oil and gas production in the County, for the sake of safe and healthy communities, the protection of environmental integrity, and the meaningful implementation of a coherent Climate Action Plan.**

We are extremely concerned that after a hiatus of thirty years, oil drilling has resumed in East Contra Costa. A new drilling site was approved only a year ago, and a new permit application for exploratory drilling is currently under review by County planners. The proposed site is within several hundred feet of residences, and is dangerously close to schools and a major medical center.

A growing body of scientific research documents the health-damaging effects of the toxic pollutants that are co-emitted with climate-harming greenhouse gases during fossil fuel extraction. Within the last few weeks, studies published by scientists at Stanford and UC Berkeley found that living near oil and gas wells in California has significant, adverse impacts on pregnant mothers and newborn babies. These findings contribute to a deepening understanding of the very serious health risks posed to all people who live a mile or more away from oil and gas drilling operations, and the greater risk for people with a half-mile.

The overwhelming evidence points to a full spectrum of harms resulting from fossil fuel extraction—from the community-level public health risks of asthma and other respiratory illnesses, pre-term births, high-risk pregnancies, and cancer, to the multiple macro-level impacts of climate change. In 2018, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that a catastrophic climate crisis would not be avoided unless global carbon levels were reduced a full 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. In the same year, over two dozen prominent climate scientists urged the phase out of all oil and gas production in California. "There is more than enough carbon in the world's already developed, operating oil, gas, and coal fields globally to exceed 2°C," they wrote to then Governor Brown. "There is simply no room in the carbon budget for any new fossil fuel extraction."

Unfortunately, our current General Plan contains a provision that not only permits oil and gas production but actually “encourages” it within agriculturally-zoned land to increase its economic “feasibility.” This thirty-year old policy was cited as a primary reason for permitting the currently active drilling site. As it stands, this policy critically undermines the health of County residents, as well as our ability to achieve essential greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions. It violates the very commitment expressed in our CAP to meet the serious challenges of climate change “by reducing local GHG emissions while improving community health.”

During this moment when our Climate Action Plan, General Plan and Zoning Codes are all undergoing revision, we must increase our commitment to build an equitable and sustainable future, even as the climate crisis increases in intensity and urgency. We cannot afford, for a moment longer, to allow continuation of an outdated policy that promotes fossil fuel production here in Contra Costa.

We therefore submit that while this process is underway, it is only just and prudent that any further permitting of oil and gas production be placed on hold. Planning decisions should not be made—or permit approvals compelled—within the existing framework of an outdated thirty-year-old policy that reflects the values (and scientific consensus) of another era. Moreover, as we establish new policy that will remain in effect through 2040, our General Plan must reflect, with the utmost integrity, the State of California’s and Contra Costa County’s urgent climate and GHG reduction goals.

Let’s work together to stabilize the climate by promoting sustainable alternatives, and make Contra Costa County a real leader in ensuring a more equitable and healthy future.

Very sincerely yours,

[Name]  
[Organization]

[Name]  
[Organization]