



Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy



SANTA BARBARA AUDUBON SOCIETY



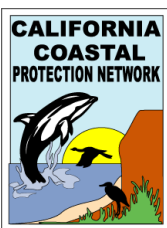
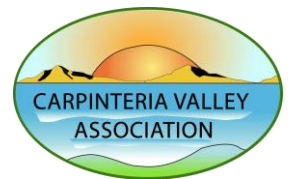
WISHTOYO CHUMASH FOUNDATION FIRST NATIONS ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION ALLIANCE



SANTA BARBARA URBAN CREEKS COLLECTIVE



tizens' Climate Lobby Santa Barbara, CA



TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH



April 3, 2026

Santa Barbara County Planning Commission  
C/O David Villalobos  
123 East Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
Via email: [dvillalo@countyofsb.org](mailto:dvillalo@countyofsb.org)

**RE: April 8, 2026 Agenda Item #1: Phase 1 Oil and Gas Prohibition Ordinance Amendments – SUPPORT**

Dear Santa Barbara County Planning Commissioners,

Our coalition of over forty-five environmental and community organizations representing thousands of your constituents urges you to support this ordinance prohibiting new oil projects. It will protect people's health, the safety of our water supply, our unique environment and rare species, and address a critical gap in Santa Barbara County's Climate Action Plan by restricting new oil development. This ordinance has been years in the making:

- **On August 27, 2024**, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors passed an updated Climate Action Plan with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030. In addition, the Board passed RESOLUTION – OIL AND GAS ACTIONS, asking staff to return with options for reducing emissions from oil and gas facilities—one of the largest sources of pollution after transportation.
- **On May 13, 2025**, Staff returned with a recommendation to prohibit new oil drilling and options for a long-term oil phase out. Supervisors directed staff to draft a plan and timeline for prohibiting new drilling and to study the feasibility of phasing out existing oil facilities.
- **On October 21, 2025**, Staff returned with that plan: First, draft an ordinance to prohibit drilling of any new oil and gas wells. Secondly, issue an RFP for an amortization study on the feasibility of phasing out existing oil facilities. The Board accepted the plan, and the next step is for this Commission to consider the resulting ordinance.

The most effective way to reduce oil and gas facility emissions is to prohibit new oil and gas projects. Oil from Santa Barbara County is [expensive and energy-intensive](#) to produce, and it has no impact on gas prices which are determined by the [global oil market and refining volume](#). This ordinance will have many local benefits:

- **Limit the most climate-damaging oil production:** The remaining oil in Santa Barbara County is heavy and energy-intensive to extract. It is some of the most polluting oil in the world to produce. Three proposals in Cat Canyon, all denied or withdrawn in 2020, would have generated 760,000 metric tons of carbon pollution

annually—just from production alone, on top of the 1.2 million tons total county emissions tracked in the county Climate Action Plan. That would have increased county greenhouse emissions by 63% when our goal is to cut them in half. We need to take projects like that off the table. The carbon intensity (which measures the full carbon cost including production, transportation and refining) of California-sourced oil is growing [at three times the rate](#) of oils produced outside of California.

- **Improve air quality and health outcomes:** Diesel trucks and gas-burning steam generators not only produce greenhouse gases, but they also emit health-damaging air pollution that causes cancer, asthma, heart disease, and other conditions. For instance, according to the [California Air Resources Board](#), oil production is the largest facility source of PM2.5, Benzene, Formaldehyde, VOCs, Nitrogen Oxide and Sulfur Oxide in the County. According to the [UCSB benefits report](#), an oil phase-out could prevent an estimated \$54 to \$81 million in PM2.5 mortality-related costs alone by 2045.
- **Improve the safety of our drinking water supplies:** Many oil fields are in the vicinity of critical drinking water aquifers. For instance, oil companies have been seeking an exemption from federal drinking water protections in Cat Canyon to inject toxic wastewater below the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin, which provides drinking water to 190,000 people. A state study identified 291 existing wells that may serve as pathways for the migration of toxic substances in that field. In addition, there have been documented oil spills into [creeks, rivers](#) and [watersheds](#). Page 50 of the EPA plan for the Casmalia [superfund](#) site notes that, “Cleanup of groundwater in this area is technically impracticable and would likely require several thousand years.”
- **Save resources:** In May 2025 the County auditor reported that the county share from oil tax revenues billed this fiscal year will only be \$1.7M, or .01% of the county budget. Oil-related employment represents an even smaller share of the county workforce. According to the [UCSB benefits report](#), oil extraction and drilling account for fewer than 100 jobs, with support activities contributing between 465 and 1,031 jobs. In a county with a workforce of 209,500, oil-related jobs make up just 0.23% to 0.54% of total employment. Yet this industry’s costs to the County (accounting, legal, road repair, emergency services, etc.) are disproportionately high.
- **Improve road safety and trucking accidents:** Santa Barbara County lacks pipelines to refineries. Due to the Phillips 66 refinery closure, trucking is needed to transport oil to market. Recent proposals have included adding thousands of additional oil tanker truck trips annually to local roads. [Oil tanker accidents](#) have created hazardous traffic, shut down roads, and have caused fires and spilled oil into waterways.
- **Safeguard wildlife and endangered species:** Oil production kills and harms endangered and sensitive plants and animal species. The Central Coast’s Mediterranean biome is a hotspot of biodiversity. The region contains numerous endemic, federally-listed, and sensitive species which were explicitly threatened by proposed oil development.
- **Prevent disasters:** Oil projects are located in high fire hazard zones and increase [wildfire risks](#). Additionally, wastewater injections can [trigger earthquakes](#). Phasing out oil will help prevent future expensive disasters.

Land use and health and safety regulation has long been the responsibility of local governments. The City of Santa Barbara has [prohibited oil drilling](#) for at least 60 years. More recently, other jurisdictions such as Culver City and the city and county of Los Angeles are in the process of phasing out all oil and gas drilling, further facilitated by the passage of [AB 3233](#) in 2024 clarifying the right of local jurisdictions to regulate oil.

Just as setting 100% renewable energy goals and joining Central Coast Community Energy has allowed Santa Barbara County to participate in a planned and affordable transition to renewable energy, setting a goal to phase out fossil fuel production will help the County plan an orderly transition away from oil and gas, provide landowners and industry with certainty, and head off costly project proposals that conflict with County efforts to protect our air, water, health, and climate.

While a full phase-out will require further study and planning, prohibiting new projects is a clear, immediate first step. We urge you to recommend Supervisors pass this ordinance.

Regards,

Maureen Ellenberger  
Chair  
Sierra Club Santa Barbara-Ventura Chapter

Linda Krop  
Chief Counsel  
Environmental Defense Center (EDC)

Sigrid Wright  
CEO/Executive Director  
Community Environmental Council

Haley Ehlers  
Executive Director  
Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas (CFROG)

Craig Lewis  
Executive Director  
Clean Coalition

Nancy Black  
Board President  
Committees for Land, Air, Water and Species (CLAWS)

Irene Cooke  
Organizer  
Society of Fearless Grandmothers Santa Barbara

Carla Mena  
Director of Policy & Legislative Affairs  
Los Padres ForestWatch

Rachel Altman  
Co-chair  
CLUE-SB Environmental Justice Work Group

John Kelley  
Group Leader  
Citizens Climate Lobby, Santa Barbara Chapter

Mary Ellen Brooks  
President  
Santa Barbara Citizens Planning Association

Bill Hickman  
Senior Regional Manager Central California  
Surfrider Foundation

Carolyn Chaney  
Co-chair  
Social Justice Ministry, Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Michal Lynch  
Organizer  
Women's March Santa Barbara

Larry Behrendt  
Steering Committee  
Indivisible Santa Barbara

Don Gaede  
Group Leader  
SLO County Citizens' Climate Education

Katherine Emery  
Executive Director  
Santa Barbara Audubon Society

Sofia Carrasco  
Youth v. Oil Intern  
Youth v. Oil

Ted Morton  
Executive Director  
Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

Sharon Broberg & Carol Millar  
Steering Committee Members  
350 Santa Barbara

Lucas Zucker  
Co-Executive Director  
Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)

Anne Middleton  
Associate Director  
WILDCOAST

Vicki Allen  
VP Communications  
League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara

Mati Waiya  
Executive Director  
Wishtoyo Foundation

Mike Wondolowski  
President  
Carpinteria Valley Association

Susan Jordan  
Founder & Executive Director  
California Coastal Protection Network

Deborah Wells-Ah Tye  
Climate Environment Action Circle/Justice and Outreach Circle  
Trinity Episcopal Church

Jake Twomey  
Statewide Board Chair  
CALPIRG Students

Michael Lyons  
President  
Get Oil Out!

Christian Alonso  
Chair  
Santa Barbara County Democratic Party

Anna Eisenberg  
Executive Co-Chair  
UCSB AS Environmental Affairs Board

Leah Redwood  
California Climate Justice Organizer  
Oil and Gas Action Network

Ken Hough  
Co-Executive Director  
Santa Barbara County Action Network

Nathan Taft  
Senior Campaigner  
Stand.earth

Anne Burdette  
President  
Santa Barbara Urban Creeks Collective

Dennis Allen  
Board Chairman, LEED AP  
Allen Construction

Nicole Ghio  
California Director  
Food & Water Watch

Emma Silber  
Coalition Co-Coordinator  
STAND-LA Coalition (Stand Together Against Neighborhood Drilling - Los Angeles)

Cheryl Auger  
Ban SUP (Single Use Plastic)

Jade Smith  
Founder/Chair  
Indivisible Ojai Valley

Paasha Mahdavi  
Professor  
UC Santa Barbara

Yehuda Ben-Hamo  
Executive Director  
CORE Project

Robert M. Gould, MD  
President  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility

Shoshana Wechsler  
Coordinator  
Sunflower Alliance

Greg Thomson  
Founder  
Green Solutions & Technologies

Diana Curiel  
Team facilitator  
Fossil Free California Votes