



October 5, 2023

Dear Supervisor Ito,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as State Oil & Gas Supervisor at the California Department of Conservation, Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM). We warmly welcome you to this important role, where, under your leadership, CalGEM has a historic opportunity to continue the important work of its mission: “to prioritize protecting public health, safety, and the environment in its oversight of the oil, natural gas, and geothermal industries while working to help California achieve its climate change and clean energy goals.”<sup>1</sup>

Our organizations work together in two statewide networks to respond to the ongoing crisis facing the millions of California residents harmed by oil and gas extraction in their neighborhoods and all who are suffering the devastating effects of climate breakdown. [VISION](#) (Voices in Solidarity Against Oil in Neighborhoods) is a bilingual coalition of environmental justice, public health, air quality, and frontline organizations that advocate to protect California's most vulnerable, low-income communities by ending extraction in their neighborhoods. The [Last Chance Alliance](#) is a statewide network made up of more than 900 public health, environmental justice, climate, Indigenous, and labor organizations that call on Gov. Newsom to end California's toxic pattern of enabling Big Oil to pollute our communities and destroy our future.

Together, our networks strive to realize three critical climate policies for California: preventing new permits for fossil fuel projects, including for oil and gas drilling, for fossil fuel infrastructure, or petrochemical projects in California; implementing a health and safety buffer zone to protect those suffering the most from oil and gas extraction in mostly frontline, low-wealth and non-white communities; and creating a statewide phase-out plan that minimizes the damage this dying industry does on its way out the door, that ensures polluters pay for the damage they've caused, and that protects and supports workers, communities, and economies.

In the past, environmental justice communities and climate advocates struggled to maintain a working relationship with the state's oil and gas regulator. However, thanks to the Newsom administration's enthusiasm for tackling climate issues head-on, CalGEM's newly clarified mission and leadership, and decades of advocacy, agency officials and community advocates have begun to create positive change together. Now, with your appointment, there is even more opportunity in this transformative moment.

We applaud Governor Newsom's recent climate leadership: the major lawsuit against the nation's five biggest oil companies and the American Petroleum Institute for decades of deceiving the public; his powerful words at the UN Climate Summit that the “climate crisis is a fossil fuel crisis;” his stated commitment to sign landmark corporate climate transparency bills (SB 253 and SB 261); his championing of the state's strongest health and safety buffer law in the country (SB 1137) to protect frontline communities from the dangers of oil drilling; and the implementation of an oil refinery and gas price gouging watchdog (SBX 1-2).

---

<sup>1</sup> “Building Climate Resilience” California Natural Resources Agency. CA.gov, 2018. <https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Building-Climate-Resilience#:~:text=California%20Geologic%20Energy%20Management%20Division's,the%20oil%2C%20natural%20gas%2C%20and>

Moreover, we see climate leadership in the Legislature, which recently passed a bill to reform the state's broken referendum system (AB 421), which oil and gas corporations are taking advantage of to undo legislation passed to protect communities. The Legislature has also sent crucial bonding reform (AB 1167) addressing the state's orphan well crisis to the Governor's desk.

California is showing global leadership on the path to ending neighborhood oil drilling and addressing the climate crisis by ushering in a new energy economy alongside a just and equitable transition for workers. It is now up to CalGEM to continue this progress.

To fulfill CalGEM's mandate and mission and to be a champion for environmental justice communities and all Californians, we respectfully urge the Division to adopt comprehensive measures that protect public and environmental health. We offer this roadmap as a guide for actions the Division can achieve in the first 100 days of your service. Our recommendations are:

1. Permitting & Community Health

- a. **Utilize the Division's authority to end permitting for new or existing oil and gas activities, including within the proposed 3,200ft health and safety buffer zone.**
- b. **Release the full public health report commissioned by CalGEM in 2021.**

2. Frontline Community Relations

- a. **Meet the communities most burdened by extraction and climate events by attending toxic tours in the greater-LA area, Ventura County, and the Central Valley.**

3. Managed Decline and Just Transition

- a. **Utilize CalGEM's extensive authority to issue and enforce plugging and abandonment orders to operators for all wells that meet criteria for immediate closure as an important step in the managed decline and full phase out of fossil fuel production in California.**
- b. **Where operators are unwilling, unable, or unavailable to comply, take swift action to perform the plugging and abandonment (increasing CalGEM staffing levels as necessary), under fair labor practice standards; and recoup all expenditures from prior operators or the industry as a whole.**
- c. **Utilize CalGEM's authority to increase bonding amounts to the level required to ensure proper closure and remediation of wells.**

We already see the positive change in the Division's role as noted by a CalGEM spokesperson in a [Reuters](#) article in July: "CalGEM is processing far more approvals to permanently close wells than for any other activity ... We expect this permitting trend to continue as California transitions away from fossil fuels." Crucially, CalGEM has stopped issuing fracking permits in our state.

However, despite years of advocacy from frontline communities and climate advocates – and alongside ample academic research<sup>2</sup> illustrating the evidence of adverse health and safety impacts associated with proximity to petroleum extraction<sup>3</sup> – CalGEM has continued to permit new oil and gas activities, even as the agency has formally recognized health impacts of these toxic operations on residents and workers.<sup>4</sup> This permitting contradicts CalGEM’s legal mandate to “prevent, as far as possible, damage to life, health, property, and natural resources” in its supervision of oil and gas operations pursuant to Public Resources Code, Section 3106(a). Effective January 1, 2020, the Legislature has further clarified CalGEM’s mission by declaring the purpose of oil and gas laws are to “protect[ ] public health and safety and environmental quality, including reduction and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions associated with the development of hydrocarbon and geothermal resources in a manner that meets the energy needs of the state.”

Already, “the total number of oil drilling permits issued blew past 15,000 since Governor Newsom took office in 2019,” and in Q2 of 2023 alone, 32% of the 755 new drilling, rework, sidetrack, and deepening permits were issued within the 3,200 ft public health protection zone.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, local impacts of oil and gas production and permitting continue to overburden frontline communities and the production decline leaves resource-dependent regions economically vulnerable.<sup>6</sup> It is clear that California urgently needs a just transition away from a fossil fuel-based economy, and that CalGEM has an important role to play.

In recognition of this transformational need and opportunity, we are excited to share the above vision for environmental justice and work with you to create a thriving and livable future. We appreciate your careful consideration of these recommendations to fulfill the Division’s mission and meet the needs of this pivotal moment in these first 100 days. We also welcome the opportunity to meet with you soon to continue the conversation on how we will work together to achieve a healthy climate and prosperous future for all Californians.

---

<sup>2</sup>Gonzalez, D.J.X., Sherris, A.R., Yang, W., Stevenson, D.K., Padula, A.M., Baiocchi, M., Burkee, M., Cullen, M.R., & Shaw, G.M. (2020). Oil and gas production and spontaneous preterm birth in the San Joaquin Valley, CA. *Environmental Epidemiology*, 4(4).

[https://journals.lww.com/environepidem/Fulltext/2020/08000/Oil\\_and\\_gas\\_production\\_and\\_spontaneous\\_preterm.1.aspx?context=LatestArticles](https://journals.lww.com/environepidem/Fulltext/2020/08000/Oil_and_gas_production_and_spontaneous_preterm.1.aspx?context=LatestArticles).

<sup>3</sup>Tran, K.V., Casey, J.A., Cushing, L.J & Morello-Frosch, R. (2020). Residential Proximity to Oil and Gas Development and Birth Outcomes in California: A Retrospective Cohort Study of 2006–2015 Births. *Environmental Health Perspectives*. Vol. 128, No. 6. <https://doi.org/10.1289/EHP5842>.

<sup>4</sup>Shonkoff, Seth et al. “RE: Response to CalGEM Questions for the California Oil and Gas Public Health Rulemaking Scientific Advisory Panel” Received by (David Shabazian, Uduak-Joe Ntuk), 1 October, 2021. [https://www.conservation.ca.gov/calgem/Documents/public-health/Public%20Health%20Panel%20Responses\\_FINAL%20ADA.pdf](https://www.conservation.ca.gov/calgem/Documents/public-health/Public%20Health%20Panel%20Responses_FINAL%20ADA.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Tucker, Liza. “California Oil Regulators Continue Issuing Permits In Q2 To Rework Leaky, Unproductive Wells; Should Order Plugging Instead, Advocates Say.” *Consumer Watchdog*. 13 July 2023. <https://consumerwatchdog.org/energy/california-oil-regulators-continue-issuing-permits-in-q2-to-rework-leaky-unproductive-wells-should-order-plugging-instead-advocates-say/>

<sup>6</sup> “California Moves to Prevent New Oil Drilling Near Communities, Expand Health Protections.” Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, October 21, 2021. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2021/10/21/california-moves-to-prevent-new-oil-drilling-near-communities-expand-health-protections-2/#:~:text=Oil%20production%20has%20been%20on,in%20demand%20for%20transportation%20fuels.>

Sincerely,

Kobi Naseck  
Coalition Director  
VISIÓN - Voices in Solidarity Against Oil in Neighborhoods  
[kobi@vision-ca.org](mailto:kobi@vision-ca.org)

Woody Little  
Organizing & Special Projects Manager  
Last Chance Alliance  
[woody@lastchancealliance.org](mailto:woody@lastchancealliance.org)

Cosigned,

Susan Penner  
Co-Chair, Legislative Working Group  
1000 Grandmothers for Future Generations

Marce Gutierrez-Graudins  
Founder / Executive Director  
Azul

Valerie Ventre-Hutton  
Legislative Analyst  
350 Bay Area Action

Cheryl Auger  
President  
Ban SUP (Single Use Plastics)

Alan Weiner  
Chapter Lead  
350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley

Anoushka Tamhane  
Director  
Bay Area Youth Lobbying Initiative

Daniel Chandler  
Steering Committee Member  
350 Humboldt

Pat-Toth Smith  
Admin  
Benicians for a Safe and Healthy Community

Katie McCammon  
Communications and Volunteer Coordinator  
350 Sacramento

Gary Hughes  
Americas Program Coordinator  
Biofuelwatch

Jan Dietrick  
Policy Team Leader  
350 Ventura County Climate Hub

Haleemah Atobiloye  
Program Manager  
Breast Cancer Action

Katie Huffling  
Executive Director  
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Igor Tregub  
Chair, CADEM Environmental Caucus  
CADEM Environmental Caucus

Maggie Tsai  
State Political Director  
Asian Pacific Environmental Network

Katie Bolin  
RN BSN PHN MPH  
California Nurses for Environmental Health &  
Justice

Valeria Aceves  
Youth Coordinator  
California Youth Vs Big Oil

Nicole Kurian  
Legislative Director  
Californians Against Waste

Kassie Siegel  
Director, Climate Law Institute  
Center for Biological Diversity

Linda Rudolph  
Senior Policy Advisor  
Center for Climate Change and Health

Kayla Karimi  
Staff Attorney  
Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment

Kevin D. Hamilton  
Executive Director  
Central California Asthma Collaborative

Genevieve Amsalem  
Research & Policy Director  
Central California Environmental Justice  
Network

Lynda Marin  
Chapter lead  
Citizens' Climate Lobby Santa Cruz Chapter

Jesus Alonso  
Community Organizer and Environmental  
Justice Advocate  
Clean Water Action

Janet Cox  
CEO  
Climate Action California

Sara Zimmerman  
Executive Director  
Climate Equity Policy Center

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

RL Miller  
President  
Climate Hawks Vote

Amanda Millstein  
MD, Co-Founder  
Climate Health Now

Antonina Markoff  
Coordinator  
Climate Reality Project California State  
Coalition

Diana Weynand  
Chair  
Climate Reality Project, San Fernando Valley  
Chapter

Bahram Fazeli  
Policy Director  
Communities for a Better Environment

Jamie Court  
President  
Consumer Watchdog

Sheilah Fish  
Vice-Chair  
Contra Costa MoveOn

Michelle Ghafar  
Senior Attorney  
Earthjustice

Meghan Sahli-Wells  
California Director  
Elected Officials to Protect America (EOPA)

Laura Deehan  
State Director  
Environment California

Bill Allayaud  
California Director of Government Affairs  
Environmental Working Group

Nancy Halpern Ibrahim  
Executive Director  
Esperanza Community Housing

Leah Redwood  
Action Coordinator  
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area

Chirag Bhakta  
California Director  
Food & Water Watch

Miriam Eide  
Director  
Fossil Free California

Fridays for Future Fresno

Supriya Patel  
Founder  
Fridays For Future Sacramento

Nicole Ghio  
Senior Fossil Fuels Program Manager  
Friends of the Earth

Elise Kalfayan  
Board Member  
Glendale Environmental Coalition

Kathy Kerridge  
Board Member  
Good Neighbor Steering Committee of  
Benicia

Amy Moas, Ph.D.  
Senior Policy Campaigner  
Greenpeace USA

Solange Gould, DrPH, MPH  
Co-Director  
Human Impact Partners

Anita Ghazarian  
Indivisible Alta Pasadena

Jennifer Tanner  
Leader  
Indivisible CA Green Team

Susan Morgan  
Founder  
Indivisible Marin

Rebecca Elliot  
Indivisible San Jose

Francesca Wander  
Indivisible SF

Adrienne Couter  
Director  
Indivisible Ventura

Veronica Wilson  
California Organizer  
Labor Network for Sustainability

Joey W. Smith  
Owner/Manager  
Let's Go Farm

Leslie Austin  
Director  
Let's Green CA!

Betsy Taylor  
Executive Director  
Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network  
(LiKEN)

Karen Reside  
President  
Long Beach Gray Panthers

David Weiskopf  
Senior Policy Advisor  
NextGen California

Ian Cohen  
Lead Coordinator  
No Drilling Contra Costa

Michael Stocker  
Director  
Ocean Conservation Research

Matt Leonard  
Director  
Oil and Gas Action Network

Allie Rosenbluth  
US Program Manager  
Oil Change International

Joseph Geevarghese  
Executive Director  
Our Revolution

Alison Huyett  
Environmental Campaigns Director  
Patagonia

Judy Irving  
Executive Director  
Pelican Media

Maro Kakoussian  
Director of Climate and Health Programs  
Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles

Harry Wang, MD  
President, PSR/Sacramento  
Physicians for Social  
Responsibility/Sacramento

Alejandra Warren  
Executive Director  
Plastic Free Future

Matt Nelson  
Executive Director  
Presente.org

Dorothy Reik  
Progressive Democrats of the Santa Monica  
Mountains

Richard Parks  
President  
Redeemer Community Partnership

Ruth Richardson  
Rooted In Resistance (Indivisible)

David Swanson  
Campaign Coordinator  
RootsAction.org

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

Rachel Altman  
Administrator  
Santa Barbara Standing Rock Coalition

Pauline Seales  
Organizer  
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network

Magi Amma  
Climate Chair  
Santa Cruz for Bernie

Erica Donnelly-Greenan  
Executive Director  
Save Our Shores

Martha Camacho Rodriguez  
Director  
SEE (Social Eco Education)

Brandon Dawson  
Director  
Sierra Club California

Jack Eidt  
Co-Founder  
SoCal 350 Climate Action

Beth Weber Novak  
President & CEO  
Spottswoode Winery, Inc.

Janeen Pederson  
Stand Strong LA Indivisible

Eric Romann  
Coalition Co-Coordinator  
Stand Together Against Neighborhood  
Drilling (STAND-LA)

Matt Krogh  
Program Director  
Stand.earth

Agustin Cabrera  
Policy Director  
Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy  
Education (SCOPE)

Eugenia Ermacora  
Los Angeles Chapter Manager  
Surfrider LA

Marilyn Price  
Co-Chair  
Sustainable Mill Valley

Magi Amma  
Convenor  
The Climate Alliance of Santa Cruz County

Ellie Cohen  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Climate Center

Jed Pauker  
Leader  
Venice Resistance

Jack Kurzweil  
Treasurer  
Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club

Janice Schroeder  
Core Member  
West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and  
Safe Jobs

Sim Bilal  
Director  
Youth Climate Strike LA