



April 6, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins  
Senate President Pro Tempore  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon  
Speaker of the Assembly  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted via email

**RE: Response to Demands to Stall or Roll Back Environmental Regulation**

Dear Governor Newsom, Pro Tem Atkins, and Speaker Rendon:

On behalf of Sierra Club California's members and supporters, thank you for your effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 16, Sierra Club staff and volunteers around the state and the country have been staying home to help flatten the curve. We have appreciated the leadership you all have shown to make sure Californians are as safe as possible. Personally, I have especially appreciated the daily updates from Governor Newsom and the state's public health experts and I have heard from friends, family and Sierra Club members that they have too.

I am writing today to underscore something that has been expressed in a number of sign-on letters from environmental groups, including ours. We are aware of a growing number of industry requests that the state roll back existing health-protective regulations or stall the progress of new health-protective regulations. Granting those requests would be a mistake.

It is audacious that, during a health emergency, certain interests would consider exploiting the situation to continue their pre-pandemic efforts to block or roll back health-protective regulation. It is jaw-droppingly amazing that certain interests would use the distraction of a pandemic to argue for relief from regulations designed to protect air quality, water quality and public health. But, unfortunately, it is not surprising. This is exactly the behavior we witnessed during the mortgage crisis of 2008. In any crisis, some see an opportunity to duck environmental responsibility.

California continues to have the worst air quality in the country. One contributor to that is the large volume of diesel emissions coming from activities at ports. The California Air Resources Board is on track to adopt an at-berth rule that will substantially cut diesel emissions from ships at berth. Rolling back or significantly delaying this effort will come at a cost to health. This is particularly true for low-income communities located in the shadow of the ports.

Another contributor to poor air quality is the huge volume of diesel trucks, including drayage trucks, that move products from place to place within California. The technology has advanced to a point where electric vehicles can replace diesel vehicles for most on-road purposes. A key to making that replacement happen is the Advanced Clean Truck Rule that will require manufacturers to produce electric trucks in a phased-in approach beginning in 2024. That rulemaking has been rescheduled to be considered in June. It is essential that that rulemaking not be delayed beyond June.

Under instruction from the governor, the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) began a process earlier this year to develop regulations that would protect public health and the environment from oil drilling impacts. The oil industry has opposed simple legislation that would codify that instruction. I anticipate that any day now—if they haven't already—industry leaders will press the administration to postpone or abandon the rulemaking because of the state of the economy. In anticipation of that, I urge you to resist any suggestions to not move forward with this health protective rulemaking.

As you all know, at the federal level the Trump administration has tried to eviscerate health-protective and other environmental regulation. His most recent actions—which would essentially guarantee dirtier air—have been taken during this pandemic.

I cannot overemphasize the relief Sierra Club and its members feel knowing that in California, things are not the same as they are in Washington, DC. We rely on you to continue leading on the environment and public health. Again, Sierra Club California urges you to resist demands to stall or roll back regulations.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Phillips  
Director

Cc: Ann O'Leary, Ana Matosantos, Christine Hironaka, Rachel Wagoner, Jared Blumenfeld, Wade Crowfoot, Kate Gordon, Nick Hardeman, Kip Lipper, Deanna Spehn, Carrie Cornwell, Myesha Jackson, Marie Liu