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CONTACT:

Kathryn Phillips, Sierra Club California Director—916-893-8494

Governor Signs Key Bill Responding to Massive Methane Leak

Sacramento, Calif.—Governor Jerry Brown has signed Senate Bill 380, an urgent bill to ensure that inspections and safety measures occur before gas injection into wells at the Aliso Canyon gas storage facility in Northern Los Angeles County is resumed.

The bill also requires the California Public Utilities Commission to determine by July 1, 2017 whether it is feasible to minimize or eliminate the use of that gas storage facility.

In October, a massive leak that took nearly five months to plug occurred at the storage facility near the community of Porter Ranch. Thousands of households were evacuated for months, and the emissions of methane, a potent climate pollutant, exceeded 97,000 metric tons. It has been called the most environmentally damaging methane leak in U.S. history.

SB 380, authored by Senator Fran Pavley, is the first of several bills addressing methane to pass and be signed into law in the wake of the Aliso Canyon leak. It had bipartisan support and received enough votes to put it on a faster track through the legislature. The other bills, including SB 887 by Senator Pavley, SB 888 by Senator Ben Allen, SB 1383 by Senator Ricardo Lara, and SB 1441 by Senator Mark Leno would all contribute to reducing methane emissions and would protect public health and the environment.

Statement by Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California:

“We wholeheartedly commend the legislature for passing, and the governor for signing, SB 380.

“The Aliso Canyon leak revealed just how poorly regulated methane gas is, and how devastating to efforts to reduce climate pollution, and how disruptive to peoples’ lives, a single leak can be.

“We need to eliminate our dependence on this fossil fuel, and get rid of these storage facilities. Until that is done, we need to make sure methane is extracted and stored in a way that doesn’t harm the environment and public health.”

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Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the Sierra Club’s 13 local chapters in California, representing nearly 380,000 members and supporters statewide.