



Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter



February 17, 2015

President Cortese and Members of the Board
County of Santa Clara
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, CA 95112

RE: Land Use Regulations – Oil and Gas Exploration

Dear President Cortese and Fellow Supervisors,

The Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter and our partners sincerely appreciate the response we received to our recent request that the Board consider updating oil and gas exploration regulations in the County Ordinance Code. Due to your support we met with the Santa Clara County Planning Office December 17 to discuss our concerns and ideas, and learn more about land use processes in the County.

Since our meeting with staff, we have thoroughly investigated the best way for Santa Clara County to regulate oil and gas exploration and promote renewable energy. At the same time, other groups such as 350.org and several Democratic Clubs have joined our effort for action in the County. Committee to Complete the Refuge also continues to support this effort. Together this growing grassroots coalition urges the Board of Supervisors to place this issue on the Board work plan and take the action outlined below.

We think it is prudent for the County to update the General Plan to prohibit additional county permits for oil and gas exploration. A similar action was approved by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors in May 2014 (resolution attached).

After following up with Santa Cruz County, we think this approach can be achieved in a straightforward manner. Santa Cruz County Supervisor John Leopold brought the action to their Board based on constituent concerns and was supported by other supervisors. According to Santa Cruz County Planner David Carlson, less than one day per week of his time was spent over about eight months to support this item. Less time may be required in Santa Clara County since Santa Cruz County established the groundwork.

The WHEREAS clauses in the Santa Cruz County resolution give sufficient reason to halt any further oil and gas exploration permits for the foreseeable future. Other reasons why we, your constituents, want to see this item on the Board's agenda are as follows:

- If new exploration is proposed at a later date, we want the opportunity to develop new regulations to ensure local control over pipelines, waste storage, heavy vehicle traffic and other associated risks and impacts of oil/gas development.

- Oil and gas exploration has recently caused pollution of aquifers in Kern County resulting in the California Division forcing an immediate shutdown of fracking operations. Unfortunately, a polluted and poisoned aquifer does not repair itself.
- We want Santa Clara County to be proactive in protecting from possible environmental impacts that are of most concern in California (see attached list of environmental concerns).
- Santa Clara County would be a good neighbor to support San Benito and Santa Cruz counties, who have taken action on this issue and are most affected by current oil and gas operations in our county.
- With 2014 being the warmest and the driest year on record, the prospects for further drought and other climate change impacts are frightening. We need to get away from fossil fuels and reduce GHG emissions as soon as possible.
- We want Santa Clara County to be a leader in supporting cleaner energy and this action will make a statement that clean energy is the preferred direction of the County.

Please contact us through Sierra Club Water Committee Chair Katja Irvin at (408) 569-8214 or katja.irvin@sbcglobal.net if you have questions.

We are hopeful of your positive action on this issue.

Respectfully Submitted,



Katja Irvin, AICP
Chair, Water Committee
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter



Eileen McLaughlin, Board Member
Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge



Connie Rogers
Former Councilmember, City of Gilroy

Attachments:
Santa Cruz County Resolution
List of Environmental Issues
Peninsula Democratic Coalition Resolution