



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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California Energy Commission Expected to Reject Puente Gas Plant in Oxnard *Unprecedented Environmental Justice Victory Will Provide New Opportunities For Clean Energy in Oxnard Region*

Oxnard, CA — A Committee of the California Energy Commission issued an unprecedented [statement](#) late yesterday stating that **it will deny the proposed 262 megawatt Puente Power project in Oxnard** because of clean energy's ability to fulfill the region's energy needs as well as environmental concerns. This is a major turning point that comes after a three-year battle by residents, advocates, and the City of Oxnard to defeat fossil fuel giant NRG Energy's proposed gas plant. The proposed rejection of this gas-fired plant marks a turning point in California's clean energy revolution and marks a trend in re-evaluating the need for gas plants across the state.

"This is a monumental victory for the thousands of people in Oxnard who have spoken out against our health and environment being sacrificed over and over to dirty energy production," said **Maricela Morales, Executive Director of the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)**.

The Energy Commission's statement [follows a letter](#) from the California Independent System Operator ("CAISO"), the entity charged with maintaining grid reliability, affirming that alternatives to the proposed gas plant are feasible, and stating that only a request for offers (RFO) can determine the cost of such alternatives. It observed that a RFO would need to be expedited if existing Once-Through-Cooling power plants are to meet their retirement dates. This urgency motivated the Commissioners to take the unusual step of publishing their intent to reject the Puente plant.

"The proposed rejection of Puente marks the end of new gas plants in California," said **Matt Vespa, Staff Attorney at Earthjustice**. "This proceeding has shown clean energy can meet reliability needs. It is now time for Southern California Edison to solicit bids to replace Puente with the clean energy resources the Oxnard community deserves."

"California is at a critical and exciting threshold of a clean energy future that will expand clean energy jobs and build healthier communities," said **Gladys Limon, Executive Director of the California Environmental Justice Alliance**. "The question has been whether the state will draw the line before or after Puente. The expected proposed decision brings us new hope that the overburdened community of Oxnard will not be left behind with obsolete fossil fuel technology, but will indeed be ushered into a clean energy future."

The City and several local environmental groups presented volumes of evidence during evidentiary hearings proving Puente would cause irreversible damage to Oxnard's rare coastal wetlands and dunes, and further degrade local air quality for a community already burdened with three coastal power plants. Based on the facts before them, the Commissioners stated that they are "unwilling" to override laws and unmitigated impacts.

"This is one of the worst places for a new power plant. It would destroy coastal wetlands and important habitat for Peregrine falcons and other threatened wildlife," said **Alicia Roessler, Staff Attorney for the Environmental Defense Center** which represents Intervenors Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter, Environmental Coalition of Ventura County and EDC. "Tying our energy future to a power plant at imminent risk from tsunamis and sea level rise is a dangerous proposition."

"This proposed decision, if adopted by the full Commission, will mark a turning point in the fight to protect clean air and water in Oxnard, and preserve a stable climate globally," said **David Weiskopf, Attorney with NextGen Policy Center**. "As we build a safer, more equitable energy system, we will no longer have one hand tied behind our back: the age of burning fossil fuels for electricity is coming to an end, for good."

"This is a huge win for the community that is already overburdened with polluting gas-plants," said **Evan Gillespie, Deputy Western Director with the Sierra Club**. "Clean energy is the preferred choice for communities across California and the people in Oxnard have set a trend for how the state looks at building our energy future."

The grassroots and legal battle against NRG's proposal to site another gas plant in Oxnard has become a quintessential environmental justice case, as the predominantly Latino and low-income community fights to free itself from multiple power plants and reclaim its beaches. The case has also caught national attention as observers watch to see whether California's leadership on clean energy policies hold true for its most vulnerable communities. The Committee's statement may be the clarion announcing a sustainable, clean energy future for all.

Resources for reporters:

[Statement](#) from the California Energy Commission's Committee on the decision to reject Puente
[Fusion video](#) on the Oxnard community's fight against Puente
Union of Concerned Scientists: "[Environmental Impacts of Natural Gas](#)"
Los Angeles Times investigation into [California's recent power plant glut](#)

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[California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. We unite the powerful local organizing of our members in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards – low-income communities and communities of color – to create comprehensive opportunities for change at a statewide level. We build the power of communities across California to create policies that will alleviate poverty and pollution. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice.
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