

Southern California Edison hunted by calls for "environmental justice"

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Community leaders are dismayed that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will make a decision regarding a new power plant on Oxnard's coast.



Satellite of Ventura (center), Oxnard (lower right), and the Pacific Coast in Ventura County, Southern California. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

income communities.

On Friday, February 12th, CPUC commissioner Carla Peterman issued a proposed decision to allow Southern California Edison (SCE) and NRG to move forward with a contract to build the 262 MW Puente gas plant in Oxnard.

Earlier this month, two other proposed decisions were rejected. However, if approved, this would be the fourth power plant in a low-income community of color and environmental groups contend that another power plant would continue a discriminatory pattern of "dumping the region's pollution in communities of color."

The CPUC is the only agency with regulatory authority and oversight of utilities proposing contracts for power plants. California environmental groups say the latest proposal would undermine the CPUC's legal mandate to address environmental justice and protect low-

Oxnard, where NRG seeks to locate the plant, is a low-income community home to existing power plants and other pollution sources.

"We are deeply concerned about this sudden alternate proposed decision to authorize an unwanted dirty power plant. We know that SCE has been lobbying heavily and this is a moment where the community deserves due process," Strela Cervas, co-director, California Environmental Justice Alliance. "We demand that SCE follows through on its obligation to take into account environmental justice. A roll-back on environmental justice protections could set a dangerous precedent in CPUC decision-making and for environmental justice communities across California. We urge the Commission to effectuate law and policies that were created to protect the communities most impacted by this decision."

The proposed decision is scheduled to be heard on March 17th.