



June 10, 2025

Via electronic email

Kern County Board of Supervisors
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Re: Second Supplemental Recirculated Environmental Impact Report for Revisions to Title 19-Kern County Zoning Ordinance (2025-A) Focused on Oil and Gas Local Permitting (SCH # 2013081079)

To the Kern County Board of Supervisors:

We, the undersigned organizations respectfully submit this letter in reference to Kern County's proposed "Revisions to Title 19-Kern County Zoning Ordinance (2025-A) Focused on Oil and Gas Local Permitting" (Ordinance). We are writing to urge you to reject the Ordinance, which would fast-track the permitting of tens of thousands of new oil and gas wells for the coming decades, without adequate environmental review or mitigation and without further notice to, or input from, affected community members. Instead of looking for ways to accelerate oil and gas development and shield it from meaningful environmental review, County leaders should take steps to better protect the health and safety of local communities, enhance the County's long-term economic well-being, and promote a more sustainable future for Kern residents and all of California.

The Ordinance undermines sound government decision making and public transparency by purporting to authorize tens of thousands of new oil and gas wells and all related infrastructure based on a single, high-level, and inadequate environmental review. The Second Supplemental Recirculated Environmental Impact Report (SSREIR) does not analyze site-specific impacts, and yet the Ordinance and SSREIR are intended to deprive residents of future notice or opportunity to comment when permits are issued for operations in their communities.

Oil and gas development and industry operations already harm far too many people in Kern County, especially in low-income communities and communities of color. Research shows that when oil and gas development occurs near neighborhoods, or when the density of development is intensified, residents suffer increased rates of adverse health effects, including but not limited to increased risk of asthma, premature births, high-risk pregnancies, and cancer.

Even though Kern County residents already breathe the worst air quality in the country, the Ordinance and SSREIR aim to make it quicker and easier for new drilling to commence, threatening increased air

pollution that would exacerbate existing health harms. The SSREIR also acknowledges that the Ordinance will cause numerous other significant adverse impacts, like reducing available groundwater supplies, increasing disruptive noise, diminishing scenic views, harming wildlife, including endangered species and their habitat, and destroying valuable farmland.

The County's long-term interests would be better served by economic diversification and investment in cleaner and more sustainable development. The oil and gas industry in California has been in decline for many years, and there is a growing epidemic of orphan wells that—if industry has its way—will become the burden of the County and taxpayers to properly plug and decommission. Rather than promote this costly industry, the County should explore ways to create jobs for workers by requiring companies to perform oil well remediation and investing in efforts to diversify the County's economy.

Expediting approval of tens of thousands of new oil and gas wells also would be a disaster for California's climate future. In recent years, California has experienced extreme heatwaves and some of the worst fires in recorded history. These events are fueled by fossil fuel production and the resulting greenhouse gases emitted into our atmosphere. Continued oil and gas development will only accelerate and worsen these emissions and their climate change effects on public health, the economy, and our collective future.

For all these reasons, we ask the Board of Supervisors to **reject** the Ordinance. Instead, we believe the Board should adopt measures to improve health and safety protections for local residents and pave the way for a community- and worker-led transition to a more secure and sustainable economic base for the County.

Your consideration of these comments is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

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