



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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BOARD AUTHORIZES SUIT TO PREVENT OIL AND GAS MINING

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors has authorized the County to join a lawsuit to preserve local control over land use, protect the integrity of the County's General Plan and prevent the federal government from issuing leases to conduct fossil fuel extraction within Santa Cruz County.

The County would be the first jurisdiction to join an ongoing suit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity and the Sierra Club against the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over opening 725,500 acres of federal public lands and mineral estate in the Bay Area and Central Coast to oil and gas exploration. The suit alleges the BLM failed to properly disclose and analyze environmental impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act.

"For decades, the people of Santa Cruz County have been leaders in preserving our environment by preventing oil and gas development both offshore and within our borders," Supervisor John Leopold said. "The BLM's actions represent a threat to our land use policies and our values, and we will take strong action to defend both."

In 2017, the Bureau of Land Management issued a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for management of oil and gas resources in the Southern Diablo Mountain Range and Central Coast of California. The Board notified BLM of its opposition to any new leasing or development in Santa Cruz County, citing the General Plan's prohibition on those activities.

In 2019, the BLM adopted an alternative not considered under its initial EIS, which identified more than 300 acres within Santa Cruz County for potential development. In June, the County submitted a protest to BLM opposing expanded oil and gas development.

"We applaud Santa Cruz County for standing up against this dangerous plan to allow fracking and drilling on these beautiful public lands," said Clare Lakewood, climate legal director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "The county's leadership to protect the health and safety of communities, wildlife and wild places stands in stark contrast to the Trump administration's determination to put fossil fuel interests above all else."

The County's General Plan prohibits the development, construction, installation or use of any facility necessary for or intended to support oil or gas exploration or development. The County alleges BLM failed to follow requirements that resource management plans be consistent with local General Plans, provided those plans are consistent with federal law.