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COMMITTEE ON
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COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

January 26, 2009

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Lt. Governor John Garamendi
Chair
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Ave, Suite 100 South
Sacramento, CA 95825-8202

Dear Chairman Garamendi and Commissioners:

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed Tranquillon Ridge Oil and Gas Field project offshore Santa Barbara County, as modified by the agreement arrived at by environmental groups and Plains Exploration & Production Company (PXP). This agreement guarantees an unequivocal end to certain oil and gas development activities on the Central Coast, while requiring a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and protecting significant lands in the County from future harmful development.

As the federal representative for the area, and as an ardent opponent of offshore oil and gas development, I have long sought to prevent new development from occurring off our coast and to end production that currently exists. Both of these strategies are necessary to protect our ecologically sensitive and economically important coastline from the risk of oil spills, air and water pollution, and harm to marine wildlife, as well as to protect the environment from global warming. As such, I support the approval of the proposed project for several reasons.

First, it will result in the shutting down of existing production. Specifically, it will bring about the early termination of production from four platforms in federal waters that currently produce oil and gas from the Point Pedernales and Point Arguello Units (Platforms Irene, Hidalgo, Harvest and Hermosa) and two associated onshore processing facilities (Gaviota Oil and Gas Processing Facility and Lompoc Oil and Gas Plant). Without the approval of this proposed project these platforms and their associated support facilities could operate indefinitely.

I am particularly supportive of the inclusion of enforceable end dates that can be implemented by multiple agencies and private parties in the proposed Tranquillon Ridge project agreement. For example, Santa Barbara County has already added the end dates for the project in its Final Development Plan for the project. And, PXP is required to include the end dates in its applications for air and coastal development permits, as well as leases from the State Lands Commission.

Second, the proposed project will help to prevent expansion of oil and gas production into offshore areas that are leased but not yet developed. The oil and gas industry has made clear its intent to target the Santa Barbara-area for additional production and use current platforms and

processing facilities to support increased development from adjacent undeveloped, but existing, leases in the Rocky Point, Bonito and Sword Units. Moreover, the outgoing Bush Administration released a draft proposed schedule for lease sales, in 2012-2015, off California in the Santa Maria and Santa Barbara/Ventura basins. Not only would these new development projects increase production levels, but also extend the life of existing operations even further, perpetuating and even exacerbating the risks to our economy and environment.

It is important to note that the proposed project, as modified by the parties to the agreement, and reflected in the Commission's staff report, is consistent with the California Coastal Sanctuary Act. I also believe the project will complement the possible reinstatement of the federal prohibition against oil and gas leasing in federal waters off our coast. As you know, the federal moratorium only prevents future offshore leasing; it does not protect our coast from existing undeveloped leases and production.

Finally, the proposed project would guarantee carbon neutrality for direct emissions from development, and includes the handing over of 4,000 acres of land for public conservation purposes. Under the agreement, following the required cleanup of the parcels by PXP, the lands will be donated to The Trust for Public Land and will be added to the state's Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve and made available for preservation along the Gaviota Coast.

In sum, the proposed project, as revised by the agreement between environmental groups and PXP, will bring about an end to the long history of oil and gas development in the Santa Barbara-area. More specifically, it will not allow any new oil and gas facilities or expand any existing facilities. Rather, the proposed project will result in the shutting down of operations from four platforms and two processing facilities, guaranteeing a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the protection of lands within Santa Barbara County. Therefore, I encourage the State Lands Commission to approve this project.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lois Capps", written in a cursive style.

LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress