



# NEWS RELEASE

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October 7, 2008

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Environmental Groups Celebrate Decision that will Phase Out Oil Development and Protect Lands in Santa Barbara County**

SANTA BARBARA, CA... The Environmental Defense Center (EDC), Get Oil Out! (GOO!), and the Citizens Planning Association of Santa Barbara (CPA) celebrated the 4-1 vote of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to approve a project that will phase out existing oil and gas development offshore Santa Barbara County. The decision came about as a result of an historic and unprecedented agreement forged between the environmental groups and Plains Exploration and Production Company (PXP). The agreement allows for development of the Tranquillon Ridge Oil and Gas Field from existing facilities, while curtailing the life of current oil and gas operations offshore Lompoc and the Gaviota Coast. The agreement further requires PXP to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect significant lands in the County. (*See Fact Sheet and Maps.*)

“The cornerstone of this agreement is the requirement that significant oil and gas development offshore Santa Barbara County will end no later than December 31, 2022,” said Nathan Alley, Staff Attorney at the EDC, who represented GOO! and CPA at the hearing. “This agreement complements our support for the federal moratorium. The moratorium is critical to preventing *new* offshore oil development, and this agreement is important because it will put an end to *existing* development that also threatens our coast with oil spills, air and water pollution, and hazardous gas releases,” he added.

“Without this agreement, PXP could indefinitely continue its current production from Platform Irene,” said Abe Powell, President of Get Oil Out! “With this agreement, we are doing exactly what our name says---we are getting oil out, **not** at some unknown time in the future, but on a hard and fast date.”

In addition to the establishment of an end date for production, the environmental groups secured an unprecedented agreement from PXP that will result in zero net greenhouse gas emissions from the project through emissions reductions and offsets.

“This proposal will also serve as a model for limiting greenhouse gas emissions in our State. For the first time, an industrial project will be carbon neutral,” said Alley. “Not only will PXP offset all of the direct emissions from its project, but the company will also contribute an additional \$1.5 million to a local fund that can be used to reduce emissions through the purchase of hybrid buses.”

The agreement came about following a proposal by PXP to expand its existing production from Platform Irene (located in federal waters), currently being sent to the Lompoc Oil and Gas Plant (LOGP) via both offshore and onshore pipelines. PXP's proposed expansion involves slant drilling from Platform Irene into the Tranquillon Ridge Field located in state tidelands between PXP's existing federal lease and the shore. PXP is already "draining" the Tranquillon Ridge Field with its existing wells, but permission to drill further into that field will allow PXP to more efficiently extract the oil.

The three groups initially opposed PXP's proposed project because it would have significantly expanded the life of the existing facilities, resulting in additional risks and impacts. A similar proposal to develop the Tranquillon Ridge Field, by Nuevo Energy Company, was opposed by environmental groups for the same reasons and was denied in 2002 by the County of Santa Barbara.

In an attempt to obtain support from the environmental groups, PXP offered to shut down its entire operation (both existing and new development) in 2022, when the existing Pt. Pedernales Project is slated, **but not required**, to end. PXP has also agreed that the 2022 end date will apply to its existing Lompoc Onshore Oil Fields. Finally, PXP has committed to terminate its Gaviota Coast operations, i.e., the Pt. Arguello Project, comprised of Platforms Hidalgo, Harvest and Hermosa, and the Gaviota processing site, by 2017.

In addition, the environmental groups and PXP partnered with The Trust for Public Land to convey about 3,900 acres of PXP land to TPL for public protection. The bulk of the donated land, approximately 3,700 acres, is located near Lompoc, adjacent to the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve. Included in this donation are lands currently used for onshore oil production, along with the 800-acre Purisima Hills site that was recently proposed for residential development. As part of the deal, PXP will withdraw its application for this project. Up to 200 more acres of conveyed land is located along the Gaviota coast.

"Preserving thousands of acres in the Lompoc uplands for permanent protection is the icing on the cake," said Steve Dunn, President of CPA, a group that not only opposed the original Tranquillon Ridge proposal, but also the Purisima Hills development project. "Through this agreement, we will guarantee an end to oil development from four separate projects, significantly reduce greenhouse gases and preserve important lands for future generations," he concluded.

The agreement must be approved by the California State Lands Commission. A tentative hearing date is scheduled for December 3.

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*The Environmental Defense Center protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action and works primarily within Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties. Since 1977, EDC has empowered community based organizations to advance environmental protection. Program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health.*

*Get Oil Out! is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to protect the natural environment and beauty of the Santa Barbara Channel from the adverse effects of oil development.*

*Citizens Planning Association is a non-profit corporation formed in 1960 dedicated to defending the County's natural resources and upholding the County's planning policies and objectives.*