

September 25, 2020

Bakersfield Field Office Manager Gabriel Garcia
Bakersfield Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Oil and Gas Lease Sale
3801 Pegasus Drive
Bakersfield, CA 93308

RE: December 2020 Oil and Gas Lease Sale (DOI-BLM-CA-C060-2020-0120-EA)

Dear Bakersfield Field Office Manager Gabriel Garcia:

As conservation, environmental justice, public health and community groups with hundreds of thousands of members in California, we urge you to halt the oil and gas lease sale proposed for December, 2020 in Kern County. This lease sale would be the first held in California in eight years, reversing progress for environmental and human health made since the cessation of federal oil and gas leasing in 2012. Ending the eight-year moratorium on federal oil and gas leasing in California would cause irreversible and unacceptable damage to our climate, health, and precious public lands, and should be rejected. Moreover, the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the sale is legally deficient and the BLM cannot lawfully move forward with the sale based on its inadequate, fast-track analysis.

Californians have experienced the full force of the climate emergency this summer, through unprecedented heat waves and fires that have been greatly intensified by the warming climate. Fossil fuel extraction and use is by far the largest driver of climate change, responsible for three-quarters of all greenhouse gas emissions. The world's leading scientists have warned that warming must be limited to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid the most catastrophic climate damages. There is enough oil and gas in already developed fields globally to take the world beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius if it were all extracted and burned, even assuming no further coal use. Selling off publicly owned oil and gas rights for new development is flatly incompatible with meeting our climate goals.

Leasing more land for oil and gas development near communities of color that are already disproportionately harmed by air and water pollution also perpetuates environmental racism. Kern County is one of the most heavily polluted counties in the nation and exposure to water and air pollution associated with oil drilling and fracking is shown to pose serious, and sometimes deadly, health harms. These harms are compounded by COVID-19 which attacks respiratory health. The disproportionate pollution of frontline communities is an example of environmental injustice that new, nearby lease sales will only exacerbate.

Some of the parcels up for sale are also right next to, or within, treasured landscapes and important wildlife habitat like the Carrizo Plain National Monument and Wind Wolves Preserve, as well as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This ACEC is supposed to provide habitat for a suite of listed species in the San Joaquin Valley. Oil and gas development

on these parcels would pose unacceptable dangers to wildlife, including the California condor and San Joaquin kit fox.

The EA for the lease sale fails to properly analyze all of these harms, as has been detailed in technical comments submitted separately. BLM cannot lawfully proceed without fully analyzing all of the environmental risks in a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as opposed to this insufficient EA. When BLM proposed opening these areas to new leasing in its most recent Resource Management Plan (RMP), over 90,000 Californians wrote to BLM to convey their overwhelming opposition to any new drilling or fracking on our public lands. The BLM's RMP and associated environmental review is now being challenged in lawsuits brought by public health advocates, environmental and outdoor recreation groups, as well as the State of California. Clearly the scientific, public, and political controversy over ending eight years of protection from oil and gas leasing also requires preparation of an EIS for this and any other proposed lease sales.

For all these reasons, we urge the BLM to cancel the proposed lease sale in Kern County.

Sincerely,

Shoshana Wechsler, 350 Bay Area

Emily Williams, 350 Santa Barbara

Matt Leonard, 350.org

Jonathan Zeichner, A Place Called Home

Fernando Serrano, Alianza Ecologista del Condado de Tulare

Barbara Sattler, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Pedro Hernandez, Audubon California

Lisette van Vliet, Breast Cancer Prevention Partners

Ian Ware, CA Youth Vs Big Oil

Susan Jordan, California Coastal Protection Network

Jane Williams, California Communities Against Toxics

Neena Mohan, California Environmental Justice Alliance

Allis Druffel IHM, California Interfaith Power & Light

Andrew Escamilla, California League of Conservation Voters

André Sanchez, California Wilderness Coalition (CalWild)

Michael J. Painter, Californians for Western Wilderness

Handri Handoyo, CALPIRG Students

Kassie Siegel, Center for Biological Diversity
Linda Rudolph, Center for Climate Change and Health
Daniel Ress, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment
Kevin Hamilton, Central California Asthma Collaborative
Nayamin Martinez, Central California Environmental Justice Network
Steven Marx, Central Coast Ag Network dba City Farm SLO
Catherine Garoupa White, Central Valley Air Quality Coalition
Daniel O'Connell, Central Valley Partnership
Jennifer Clary, Clean Water Action
Matthew Vasilakis, Climate Action Campaign
RL Miller, Climate Hawks Vote
Justine Massey, Community Water Center
David Feinman, Conservation Lands Foundation
Don Chartrand, Creek Lands Conservation
Christy Zamani, Day One
Mary Gutierrez, Earth Ethics, Inc
Michelle Ghafar, Earthjustice
Grant Helete, ECOSLO - Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo
Nancy Halpern Ibrahim, Esperanza Community Housing Corporation
Virginia Nixon, Fearless Grandmothers
Alexandra Nagy, Food & Water Watch
Elena Salinas O'Toole, Food and Water Action Santa Barbara
Brook Lenker, FracTracker Alliance
Ronald Martin, Fresnans against Fracking
Josefa Vega, Fresno Democratic Socialists of America
Michael Wellborn, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
Nicole Ghio, Friends of the Earth
Kyle Hamada, Friends of the Inyo

Caroline Henderson, Greenpeace USA
Shanna Edberg, Hispanic Access Foundation
Linda Bassett, LA Democratic Party Central County Committee AD63
Emma De La Rosa, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
Carolyn Chaney, Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Ministry
Rebecca August, Los Padres Forest Watch
Dwight Ewing, Merced Bicycle Coalition
Samuel Molina, Mi Familia Vota
Vanessa Terán, Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project
Douglas Tait, Morro Coast Audubon Society
Linda Hutchins-Knowles, Mothers Out Front
Nada Culver, National Audubon Society
Mark Rose, National Parks Conservation Association
Ann Alexander, Natural Resources Defense Council
Belinda Faustinos, Nature for All
Susan Harvey, North County Watch
David Monkawa, Progressive Asian Network for Action
Benjamin Eichert, Romero Institute
David Braun, Rootskeeper
Rebecca August, Safe Energy Now, North County
Jill ZamEk, San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace
Pia Piscitelli, San Diego 350
Grace Feldmann, Santa Barbara Standing Rock Coalition
Heather Howell, Santa Lucia Chapter Sierra Club
Ara Marderosian, Sequoia ForestKeeper®
Jenny Binstock, Sierra Club
Jonathan Ullman, Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter
Irene Cooke, Society of Fearless Grandmothers - Santa Barbara

Wilder Zeiser, Stand.earth
Janet Johnson, Sunflower Alliance
Alex Montes, Sunrise Bay Area
Esmé Hassell-Thean, Sunrise Davis
Riddhi Patel, Sunrise Kern County
Gavin Garza, Sunrise Movement Fresno
Nicole Levin, Sunrise Movement Los Angeles
Carmen Bouquin, Sunrise Movement San Luis Obispo
Jennifer Savage, Surfrider Foundation
Anna Cummins, The 5 Gyres Institute
Ellie Cohen, The Climate Center
Frazier Haney, The Wildlands Conservancy
Kate Hoit, Vet Voice Foundation
Genevieve Gale, Young Fresnans for the Environment
Lizbeth Ibarra, Youth vs Apocalypse