



PRESS RELEASE

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Strike Three—Terracore’s out!

Santa Barbara, CA – The withdrawal of the Terracore oil and gas project (formerly known as ERG and now Cat Canyon Resources) is the final nail in the coffin for what could have been a massive expansion of risky oil and gas operations in Santa Barbara County. For years now, oil operators in the Cat Canyon Oil Field have been actively pursuing three steam injection projects to drill around 760 new wells in the Field, add over 400 tanker truck trips to local roadways and highways, and contribute nearly 700,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent per year—wreaking havoc on our communities’ air and climate. Earlier this year, Aera Energy, LLC and PetroRock withdrew their applications for more oil drilling in Cat Canyon.

Together, these three oil projects had been considered one of the largest environmental justice threats in Santa Barbara County history. The Environmental Defense Center (“EDC”) is the leading law firm representing Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter and Santa Barbara County Action Network (“SBCAN”) to oppose these three projects, with a broad coalition of environmental, climate justice, and community groups. Although low oil prices and the recent news of Phillips 66’s decision to close its Santa Maria refinery unsettled the terrain, the persistence of a coalition of environmental groups in speaking out against Terracore’s project, coupled with EDC’s legal strategy, contributed to the project’s ultimate demise. The defeat of the three Cat Canyon projects marks the end of one of the greatest assaults on Santa Barbara County’s clean air and water, our climate, and our community health.

“Terracore’s project would have chained Santa Barbara County to decades and decades of dirty fossil fuel energy production in close proximity to an elementary school and homes,” said Tara Messing, Staff Attorney for EDC. “The defeat of these three steam injection projects in Cat Canyon should send a clear signal to the oil industry that we will not compromise our climate for carbon intensive projects like Terracore’s proposal.”

“A major looming threat to our air, water and climate has been removed, at least for now,” said Katie Davis, Chair of the Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter. “A window of opportunity has opened

for our County to turn its attention to building the healthy, sustainable, clean energy economy of the future instead.”

“Oil and clean water do not mix, and Terracore’s project would have injected millions and millions of contaminated wastewater into underground aquifers,” said Ken Hough, Executive Director for SBCAN. “The communities that rely upon the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin for drinking water can rest a bit easier without the threat of these three steam injection projects.”

“Terracore has made the right decision. This is a clear victory for the climate and humanity; it is also an indictment of oil companies who have made it clear they only care about their profits,” stated Michelle Sevilla and Emily Williams with 350 Santa Barbara. “They would have single-handedly skyrocketed our County’s greenhouse gas emissions, and yet easily abandon their workers when the economic conditions were no longer profitable. There is no room for error.”

“Our communities, our water, our air, and our climate are safer today because people in both north and south county worked together for a better future for us all. Santa Barbara County residents want safer and sustainable energy, and we’re going to get it,” said Rebecca August, Safe Energy Now.

“When we fight together with frontline organizations like Lideres Campesinas, MICOP, CAUSE and Santa Barbara Standing Rock Coalition we win! This is a victory not only for our community and our sacred environment, but for seven generations after us. We know that fossil fuel drilling threatens our water, our health, and our climate. This is a big win for our region,” stated Ana Rosa Rizo-Centino, Senior Organizer on the Central Coast for Food & Water Action.

“MICOP is a strong believer in the movement for environmental justice. We believe water is life. As an organization working to serve indigenous speaking migrants in Santa Maria, MICOP applauds the withdrawal of the Terracore proposal at Cat Canyon. The proposed oil wells would have put Santa Maria’s drinking water at risk solely for the benefit of oil companies. This is water that our community members rely on for cooking, bathing, and drinking. We stand in solidarity with our partners who helped make today possible and stand firm in the fight to protect our environment,” said Vanessa Terán, Policy & Communications Associate at MICOP.

“Thank you to all those who worked to protect the land and the water,” said Michael Cordero, Chumash Elder and co-founder Santa Barbara Standing Rock Coalition.

“Lideres Campesinas of the Central Coast celebrates Terracore going back on their plans to drill in Cat Canyon. This is a grand triumph and we will keep our commitment to continue protecting the environment of our beautiful County and the health of its inhabitants,” stated Rosalba Garcia, Secretary of Lideres Campesinas’ Central Coast Committee.

“This is a major victory for environmental justice for the people of the Santa Maria Valley. Our community stood up for our right to clean air and water and our voices were heard,” said Hazel Davalos, Organizing Director of CAUSE.

The implications of these project withdrawals extend far beyond the three projects themselves. These same three oil operators had requested an exemption from federal drinking water protections that would cover the entire Cat Canyon Oil Field to allow oil companies to inject steam and wastewater into underground aquifers. Along with the exemption, these projects would have threatened water supplies for over 150,000 North County residents in areas that are already ranked among the top one percent for groundwater threats. EDC is continuing to advocate against approval of this exemption, especially since the U.S. Geological Survey is expected to release a study on the potential impacts to groundwater quality from oil and gas operations in Cat Canyon.

Today's announcement is celebrated as a victory, but there is still more that needs to be done. As our community continues to embark on a just transition to 100% renewable energy generation, EDC, our clients, and our partners will remain engaged on these efforts to promote a healthy environment that can be enjoyed by all.

"We are on our way to a safer and healthier energy future," said Larry Bishop with Safe Energy Now North County.

"Marching forward for climate justice! With great appreciation for the dedication and persistence of so many," said Michal Lynch on behalf of Womens March Santa Barbara.

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*The **Environmental Defense Center**, a non-profit law firm, 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 climate and energy, and protecting clean water, the Santa Barbara Channel, and open space and wildlife. Learn more about EDC at www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org*

*The **Sierra Club** is a national, environmental organization that protects communities, wild places, and the planet. The Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter serves Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. Learn more about Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter at <http://lospadres.sierraclub.org/>*

***Santa Barbara County Action Network** works to promote social and economic justice, to preserve our environmental and agricultural resources, and to create sustainable communities. SBCAN advocates a holistic approach to community planning that integrates housing, open space, and transportation to meet the needs of all members of our community and future generations. Learn more at www.sbcan.org.*