



May 12, 2021

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

We are writing to express support for the expedited permanent closure of the Playa del Rey Natural Gas Storage Facility and to request that your offices begin work with the CPUC, CALGEM and any other relevant agencies in order to initiate a just and fair transition process for the site's decommissioning.

A recent report by the California Council of Science and Technology (CCST), "The Long-Term Viability of Underground Gas Storage in California," determined that the Playa del Rey facility "stands out as a facility with relatively higher risk to health and safety than the other facilities in California," noting the risk to the facility posed by sea level rise, as well as its presence "near a large population center in a very high wildfire hazard zone". At the same time, this facility provides "only about 1% of total natural gas storage across California."

The public safety risks posed by this facility directly endanger the thousands of residents of Santa Monica who reside in its proximity. The disastrous Aliso Canyon gas blowout of 2015 led to the evacuation of thousands of residents within a five-mile radius from the facility. Should a similar event occur at Playa del Rey – that evacuation radius could include nearly half of Santa Monica, as well as essential infrastructure such as LAX.

As we move to transition our city towards a clean energy economy, we must remain committed to the decarbonization of our buildings, vehicles and lifestyles. As noted by the CCST report, the Playa facility has a "long history of loss-of-containment" incidents, some of which led to the halting of all injections at the facility for over a year in 2011. The harm caused by methane leakage has only recently been made clear. Recent reports in the journals of *Nature* and *Science* have demonstrated that methane leaks from the US oil and gas industry could be 60% greater than official estimates. In addition to methane, toxins and carcinogen released by the Playa del Rey facility include Nitrogen Oxides, Sulfur Oxides, Particulate matter, Ammonia, Benzene and Formaldehyde, among others.

Protecting the health and long-term sustainability of Santa Monica's residents requires us to begin planning for what a process to close this facility will look like. Such a transition requires far more than simply changing how we produce and consume energy. It requires us to reimagine how our state can hold itself accountable to the workers, communities, and those who are at the frontlines of this transition. LA County has already begun enacting a just-transition task force focused on plugging and remediating nonproductive oil wells in unincorporated parts of the county – the State must begin gathering stakeholders so that similar forward-thinking proposals can occur at facilities like Playa del Rey.

Creating a fair process for closing down the infrastructure at Playa del Rey requires us to commit to action now, so that we best plan on how to empower community in our state to a clean energy economy.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sue Himmelrich
Mayor