

December 4, 2024
Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Aliso Canyon

Dear Governor Newsom,

Nine years ago the San Fernando Valley experienced the worst gas blowout in U.S. history at Aliso Canyon. As scientists who have expertise and concern about our climate, health, and communities we implore you to finally require its closure by 2027 or earlier. The facility is not needed and poses a continued threat to public health, safety and the climate.

As you have acknowledged, we are in the midst of a climate and public health crisis. We appreciate, for example, your leadership in signing SB 1137, which created a setback between oil drilling and communities. You rightly recognized that having toxic fossil-fuel operations next to communities poses a significant health threat to them and we need to move quickly off of fossil fuels.

There is no greater example of the impact of a single fossil-fuel project on the health of a community or the climate than the Aliso Canyon gas storage facility. When it blew out in 2015, it forced the displacement of thousands of residents who, in the following weeks, months and years reported a litany of health impacts from nosebleeds and dizziness to respiratory problems and cancer. Preliminary [findings](#) for the UCLA Aliso Canyon Disaster Health study have found that pregnant mothers exposed to the blowout were 50% more likely to have babies with low birthweights and 50% more likely to have premature births.

On top of that, the location of the facility is a serious threat to public safety as it sits atop the Santa Susana Fault Line, which has the potential to erupt in a [7.3](#) magnitude earthquake. Every single well at Aliso Canyon bisects this fault line. Regulators [know](#) an earthquake of at least 6.3 magnitude is likely in the next 50 years, and [experts warn](#) that the worst-case scenario is a blowout three times worse than the previous. Further, Aliso Canyon is in a high risk fire zone, catching fire twice in the past 20 years. A fire leads to a high risk of explosion at this methane storage facility.

In terms of the climate, the amount of methane released during the blowout was catastrophic. This one release accounted for a [quarter of all methane emissions](#) from the Los Angeles basin for a year. In this time of climate crisis, we cannot risk the repeat of this scenario. Beyond that, however, since the blowout the field has [had periodic leaks](#), endangering local community health as well as producing more methane emissions.

The Aliso Canyon gas storage facility is not necessary as evidenced by the time it was shut down during and after the blowout. The rapid growth in renewable energy negates its need. Between March and October 2024, for example fossil-gas use on the CAISO grid [decreased 27%](#) compared with the same period in 2023 due to the growth in solar PV and battery storage.

Governor Brown committed to shutting Aliso down by 2027 and we were heartened by your pledge to speed that process up. Rather than move to shut it down however, your Public Utilities Commissioners have voted in the past to expand its use. Most recently, a preliminary CPUC decision proposes to evaluate, every two years, starting in June of 2025, whether its use had declined sufficiently for a shutdown plan to commence. However, the storage facility is simply not needed today and a danger to the local community around it, so should be shut down immediately.

If the concern is really insufficient supply, the answer is not to delay closing Aliso Canyon, but rather to accelerate battery storage, offshore wind, and enhanced geothermal and reconsider the restrictive 2024 net-metering decision as well as your [veto for solar on schools and farms](#). These net-metering and veto actions caused distributed (community and rooftop) [solar PV installations to decrease](#) by 50% between 2023 and late 2024 (even then, it is estimated that [rooftop solar saved ratepayers \\$2.3 billion](#) in avoided new transmission costs in 2024 alone). Together, these measures will help eliminate the need for fossil gas in the state and help supply future increases in electricity demand.

Sincerely,

Scientists joining this letter do so in their individual capacities and not on behalf of the institutions with which they are affiliated.

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