This post is co-authored by Sean Hecht, Cara Horowitz, and Beth Kent.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed three motions earlier this month that will start a process of phasing out existing oil and gas drilling on unincorporated land within the County, prohibiting new oil and gas extraction wells, and implementing a strategy to transition workers to stable jobs in the clean energy economy. The landmark motions, which were introduced by Supervisors Holly Mitchell and Sheila Kuehl, make Los Angeles County the first county in the U.S. to begin phasing out existing oil drilling operations, and the motions will provide health and environmental benefits for frontline communities and the region. Supervisor Mitchell emphasized the importance of the County's action, stating "In addition to this equity issue, which should concern all of us, oil and gas drilling is contributing to the climate crisis, which we are collectively bearing witness to every single day."

The Board's action follows over a decade of advocacy and organizing by nonprofit and community-based organizations. The effort to phase out oil and gas extraction in L.A. County has been led by a coalition of environmental and social justice organizations including Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, Communities for a Better Environment, Natural Resources Defense Council, Food & Water Watch, Sunrise Movement LA, Community Health Councils, Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, and Liberty Hill Foundation. STAND-L.A., an environmental justice coalition whose organizing and advocacy to end neighborhood oil drilling in the City of L.A. since 2013 have been integral to creating the conditions that led to the County's actions, is also a member of the County coalition. Physicians for Social Responsibility–Los Angeles represents STAND-L.A.'s Steering Committee members and allies in the County coalition.

The Board's motions also track recommendations made by UCLA Law's Frank G. Wells Environmental Law Clinic in two letters sent to Los Angeles County earlier this summer on behalf of clients. The letters detailed the County's power to phase out oil and gas operations:

- The first letter focused on the County's general authority to phase out oil and gas operations on land within the County's jurisdiction. It was submitted on behalf of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, a nonprofit organization that builds parks and community gardens in environmental justice communities and advocates for healthy and sustainable land use practices, including developing parks on former oil fields and well sites. The letter was

drafted and submitted by Wells Clinic co-director Sean Hecht and Emmett/Frankel Fellow Beth Kent, and included the conclusions of research conducted by Clinic attorneys and students over several years in various contexts.

- The second letter, submitted on behalf of Clinic client Natural Resources Defense Council, provided suggestions related to phasing out oil and gas production on the County's portion of the Inglewood Oil Field. This field is governed by the Baldwin Hills Community Standards District, which imposes a unique set of standards on oil and gas operations. The letter was submitted by Wells Clinic co-director Cara Horowitz and researched and drafted by Clinic students Madison Dipman '22 and Reilly Nelson '22.

The Board of Supervisors' action will help reduce the negative health effects associated with living near drill sites. Today in Los Angeles County, there are more than 5,000 active and idle oil wells, and more than 500,000 County residents live within one-half mile of an active drill site. The Inglewood Oil Field is the largest urban oil field in the U.S., and ninety percent of the field is located in unincorporated Los Angeles County. The remaining ten percent of the field is located in Culver City, and the Culver City Council voted to phase out oil and gas operations on its portion of the Inglewood Oil Field earlier this year.

Oil and gas operations are correlated with higher rates of asthma, sinus problems, eye burning, severe headaches, loss of sense of smell, persistent cough, and nose bleeds, among other long-term health impacts. Los Angeles' low-income communities and communities of color bear the brunt of these impacts, contributing to public health and environmental inequities.

As detailed in our letters, Los Angeles County's inherent local police power allows it to phase out oil and gas operations. The Board's actions align with several observations included in our letter. For all unincorporated areas within the County, the motion will set the stage for the County to update its 40-year-old oil and gas extraction-related zoning code provisions to prohibit new drilling and phase out existing oil and gas operations. As we explain in our letter, a phase-out ordinance that includes an amortization period—a period of time before phase-out that allows oil companies to earn a return on their investment—is especially unlikely to expose the County to significant liability from vested rights or takings claims, and the County's motion moves forward with steps to develop an amortization-based approach to phase-out. For the Inglewood Oil Field, the County motion leaves open various options for the County to update the Baldwin Hills Community Standards

District to ensure the ultimate phase-out of drilling operations.

The County's historic decision to phase out oil and gas operations is an important step in the transition to a cleaner energy future – and will help protect the health of Los Angeles' disproportionately impacted residents and our local environment. Much hard work lies ahead in removing fossil fuel infrastructure and preparing this land for healthier uses. As we look to the future, we hope the City of L.A. and other local governments throughout California will soon follow the County's lead.