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CONTACT:

Kay Cuajunco (619) 889-7865 or kay@caleja.org

Rachel Boyer (651) 315-6553 or rachel.boyer@sierraclub.org

NRG to Close Multiple Gas Plants in California

Gas Plant Closures Follow a Statewide Trend Away From Gas-fired Power

LOS ANGELES -- NRG Energy will retire three gas-fired power plants in Rancho Cucamonga (Etiwanda), Oxnard (Ormond Beach) and Goleta (Ellwood). The decision to close these plants aligns with a trend that's sweeping across California-- gas plants aren't being built or retiring due to community opposition and the growth of clean energy in the state.

Among these plants is Etiwanda, which will close on June 1, 2018. The plant sits in a largely low-income, community of color that has fought for its retirement after sitting in the shadows of its pollution since 1962. The Inland Empire suffers from the highest levels of smog and some of the highest concentrations of soot in the country. The area's pollution woes have translated to high rates of asthma and other respiratory diseases that has had a big impact on the region's economy. The Oxnard community also struggles with similar environmental and health issues as the Inland Empire.

The Inland Empire, Oxnard and Goleta are part of many communities across the state that are fighting new gas-fired power plants as clean energy costs decline and more research about its impact to the environment and public health is released. This is not an unfamiliar trend. Coal plants went through the same process that current and proposed gas plants are facing today-- community opposition and a cheaper, better alternative. NRG's announcement continues a trend of trouble for existing gas plants in the state, many of which are struggling to compete in the face of rapid expansion of clean energy and effective energy savings programs.

Meanwhile, four gas plant proposals were put on hold as utilities and regulators consider clean energy alternatives (full list below). [The vast majority of California gas plants are running on less than a third of its available capacity](#). As decision makers determine energy needs after these plants shutter, the community is hoping that clean energy will get a first shot at making up this lost power.

Gladys Limon, Executive Director, California Environmental Justice Alliance released the following statement:

"The retirement of these power plants is long overdue. We need to be looking statewide at how to take down the unnecessary, polluting plants in environmental justice communities. Dirty natural gas power plants have no place in the backyards of our most vulnerable communities, especially when better, safer, and cheaper alternatives are available right now. With this new development, we expect our public agencies and utilities to rise to the occasion and meet their responsibilities to both protect the public's health and safety and ensure that environmental justice communities transition into the clean energy future. Decision makers must fully open the door for clean energy solutions that will bring local jobs and clean air to communities across California."

Evan Gillespie, Campaign Manager for Sierra Club's My Generation Campaign said:

"Closing these plants is more proof that clean energy is driving gas out of California. As clean energy grows, our reliance on gas generation is falling quickly and we urge the California Independent System Operator to continue looking at innovative ways to replace these projects with clean energy solutions. Clean energy is the preferred option among Californians and in particular the communities most often forced into housing our country's polluting power plants.

Given the trends, these plants won't be the last to announce retirement in 2018. Now is the moment to define what a transition off gas looks like that benefits communities most impacted by fossil fuels and ensure the transition is orderly and just."

California gas plants that were rejected or put on hold:

- [The Puente gas plant](#) is the first gas plant to be denied in the state of California. The plant was slated to be built in a low-income, community of color that fought back on building what would have been fourth power plant in Oxnard. Community opposition combined with cheap clean energy ultimately killed plans to build the gas plant and now Southern California Edison is securing clean energy proposals.
- California Energy Commission (CEC) suspends permit for the Puente Power Plant. Southern California Edison announces Request For Proposals for clean energy to replace Puente that same month.
- In 2016, the La Paloma Generating Plant filed for bankruptcy and the Sutter Energy Center closed for lack of sufficient sales.
- NRG closes the Mandalay gas plant in Oxnard in December 2017.
- CPUC [issues draft resolution](#) proposing PG&E replace three power plants (including a 605MW plant in San Jose) with clean energy alternatives in Dec. 2017.
- California regulators said in a press release that any potential needs the natural gas plants provide can be met with clean energy, particularly battery storage in Dec. 2017.
- Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) announced plan to pause 1,682 MW of gas plant repowers under consideration to study clean alternatives in June 2017.

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[California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. We unite the powerful local organizing of our members in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards – low-income communities and communities of color – to create comprehensive opportunities for change at a statewide level. We build the power of communities across California to create policies that will alleviate poverty and pollution. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice. www.caleja.org

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3 million members and supporters. In addition to helping people from all backgrounds explore nature and our outdoor heritage, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org