



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 17, 2017

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

See Contacts Below

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITIES CONFRONTING RISING SEA LEVELS FIGHT BACK

*Marin and San Mateo Cos., City of Imperial Beach Go to Court
to Hold Largest Fossil Fuel Polluters Accountable*

(Redwood City, CA, San Rafael, CA, and Martinez, CA) – Faced with mounting costs to respond to threats to their communities from rising sea levels, Marin and San Mateo Counties, along with the City of Imperial Beach, today filed complaints in California Superior Court to hold accountable 37 oil, gas, and coal companies for the ongoing harm they knew their fossil fuel products would cause by significantly increasing carbon dioxide pollution and contributing to global warming and sea level rise. The [complaint](#) states:

Defendants have known for nearly 50 years that greenhouse gas pollution from their fossil fuel products has a significant impact on the Earth's climate and sea levels.... With that knowledge, Defendants took steps to protect their own assets from these threats through immense internal investment in research, infrastructure improvements, and plans to exploit new opportunities in a warming world.

Instead of working to reduce the use and combustion of fossil fuel products, lower the rate of greenhouse gas emissions, minimize the damage associated with continued high use and combustion of such products, and ease the transition to a lower carbon economy, Defendants concealed the dangers, sought to undermine public support for greenhouse gas regulation, and engaged in massive campaigns to promote the ever-increasing use of their products at ever greater volumes.

“The environmental harm these companies knowingly caused to our precious shorelines, and the entire world, and their deliberate efforts to conceal those frightening truths, jeopardizes the public’s health and places the financial burden of those consequences on the taxpayers,” said San Mateo County Board of Supervisors President Don Horsley. “With this legal action, the County of San Mateo and our partners in Marin County and Imperial Beach are standing up for our residents and businesses to hold these companies accountable for their emissions and lay blame where it truly belongs. The damage they’ve caused and continue to cause is unacceptable. But the fact that they’d prioritize their bottom line over the health and security of the public — including children — in the face of hard science is unconscionable.”

The 37 companies named in the complaints are responsible for approximately 20% of all industrial carbon dioxide and methane pollution between 1965-2015, according to calculations based on a peer-reviewed methodology used to analyze the companies' own data. Further, the well-established body of science known as cumulative carbon correlates these particular amounts of emissions to specific climate change impacts such as warming and rising seas, ocean acidification and atmospheric temperature.

"Sea level rise is here and we're experiencing it first hand in Marin, as roadways continually flood with king tides and storms," said Marin County Supervisor Kate Sears. "The best available science shows billions of dollars of homes, businesses, roads and other facilities, as well as thousands of acres of beaches, wetlands and habitat areas, are at risk from rising seas and more severe storms. The cost of trying to protect them, and the human anguish over those that will be lost, will be shocking and crippling."

In Marin County, more than 12,000 homes, businesses and institutions could be at risk from tides and surge flooding by the end of the century, with the vulnerable properties assessed at nearly \$16 billion. San Mateo County has been called ground zero for sea level rise impacts due to the value of infrastructure and people at risk. A 2009 Pacific Institute report calculated that San Mateo County has more at risk in terms of parcel value and number of people than any other county in the state. And Imperial Beach, the city with the highest poverty rate in San Diego County, expects sea level rise to flood wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, roads, private property and two elementary schools.

"Sea level rise is harming Imperial Beach and threatening our future," said Serge Dedina, mayor of the San Diego County municipality. "As a low-income coastal community, we have no capacity to pay for the adaptation measures needed to protect ourselves from these impacts. It is unfair to force citizens, business owners and taxpayers to fend for ourselves when the source of the problem is so clear. It is more critical than ever that we hold those corporate polluters accountable."

The plaintiffs filing this complaint are represented by their respective county and city attorneys, and assisted by outside counsel from Sher Edling, LLP.

###

CONTACTS:

Mayor Serge Dedina	Imperial Beach	619.623.5975 serge.dedina@imperialbeachca.gov
Michelle Durand	San Mateo County	650-363-4153 mdurand@smcgov.org
Laine Hendricks	Marin County	415-359-4508 LHendricks@marincounty.org
John Lamson	Resource Media	720-564-0500 x12 john@resource-media.org