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# NATIVE-LED NONPROFIT FILES TO AXE GAS PLANT PROJECT ON SACRED LANDS

*Calpine Corporation requested to freeze its application process, but the Wishtoyo Foundation and Earthjustice say this misguided project must end now*



**Mati Waiya, a Chumash ceremonial elder, founder and executive director of the Wishtoyo Foundation.**

CHRIS JORDAN-BLOCH / EARTHJUSTICE

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*California should not be in the business of building new gas-fired power plants. Those days are behind us.*

– Angela Johnson Meszaros  
Staff Attorney, Earthjustice

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## **MARCH 23, 2018**

Ventura County, CA — The Wishtoyo Foundation, a Native-led nonprofit dedicated to protecting Chumash lifeways in Southern California, is fighting a gas-fired plant proposed by Texas-based Calpine Corporation. Last week, Calpine Corporation [requested to suspend](#) its application to CA's energy regulators in the face of heavy opposition and major energy trends showing that gas plants have no future in California. However, by freezing their application the door may still be open to Calpine picking this project back up in the future if economics and regulations shift their way. Today, the Wishtoyo Foundation filed a response to Calpine's motion with the California Energy Commission arguing that it should foreclose that possibility and end this fossil fuel project once and for all.

Mission Rock is a proposed 275-megawatt project that Calpine wants to build on the banks of the *Utom*, the Santa Clara River. Winding through Ventura County to the sea, it is one of the last free-flowing rivers in Southern California.

*Utom* and its ecosystem is within Chumash traditional territory and Chumash people, now and since time immemorial, live in relationship with the river. The pipelines and transmission lines that will be built to connect Calpine's power plant to the gas systems that extend far beyond California's borders will disturb Chumash sacred sites, cultural and natural cultural resources, and harm



**The banks of the *Utom*, the Santa Clara River.**

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many plants, animals, and the beauty of the Santa Clara River Valley. All of this is infrastructure that would pollute the environment for decades, as natural gas plants are built to run for four decades or more, and even then may stick around as rotting industrial infrastructure when fossil fuel companies [resist removing them](#).

“We will diligently fight this project until the California Energy Commission terminates Mission Rock and removes all risk of a dirty fossil fuel power plant being built on the banks of *Utom*, the Santa Clara River, which holds Chumash cultural and natural cultural resources necessary for Chumash lifeways,” said **Mati Waiya, a Chumash ceremonial elder, founder and executive director of the Wishtoyo Foundation**. “We will fight to ensure *Utom* is protected now and for future generations.”

There is no energy need for the Mission Rock gas plant in the Ventura County community. Strikingly, Calpine’s proposal relies on a state energy loophole born in the deregulation era of the 1990s which would allow them to license and then build a plant while the community has no need for its energy.

“The Mission Rock gas plant was a terrible idea from day one, and we’re proud to stand with the Wishtoyo Foundation as we fight to end this project once and for all,” said **Angela Johnson Meszaros, a staff attorney at Earthjustice representing the Wishtoyo Foundation in the fight against Mission Rock**. “California should not be in the business of building new gas-fired power plants. Those days are behind us. It’s time to close that dirty chapter of our history and embrace our clean energy future,”

The California Energy Commission has until March 30, 2018 to take action on the motion.

## **GAS-FIRED PLANTS TAKE A NOSEDIVE IN CALIFORNIA**

California has a glut of fossil fuel power plants that is driving up our electricity bills and churning pollution into air already rated [the worst](#) in the nation. This, coupled with the heightened resistance from local communities who refuse to become sacrifice zones for new fossil fuel projects, is changing the playbook on gas-fired plants in California.

Fossil fuel companies are hitting roadblocks where they once could overbuild new gas plants and pass along the costs to the local community and ratepayers with ease. Regulators in California are paying attention, as when California Energy Commission board members signaled that they would recommend [rejecting](#) the

Puente gas plant, slated for the beach a mere 20 minute drive away from Mission Rock, in favor of clean energy options.

“You’re not going to get anywhere if you are just adding more and more gas,” Robert B. Weisenmiller, chairman of the California Energy Commission, told the [Wall Street Journal](#) recently. “At some point soon we’ll be permitting the last gas plant in California.”



**Mandalay Bay gas plant in Oxnard, CA.**

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Over the last several months, proposed gas plants in California have gone down in defeat and existing gas-fired plants are shutting down decades before their expected retirement. [NRG recently announced](#) this month that it would shutter three gas-fired plants—Etiwanda in Rancho Cucamonga, Ormond Beach in Oxnard, and Ellwood in Goleta. In December the CA Public Utilities Commission pressed [Pacific Gas & Electric](#) to replace another three gas-fired plants with energy storage, shuttering the large Metcalf Energy Center near San Jose, and the Feather River Energy and Yuba City Energy Centers near Yuba City. On March 22, California energy regulators approved a non-fossil fuel alternative plan to the Puente gas plant proposed for Oxnard’s beach.

## RESOURCES FOR REPORTERS:

- Photos of the Wishtoyo Foundation and the *Utom* River [available for media use](#).
- [Read our response to Calpine Corporation’s motion to suspend their application](#).
- Op-ed from Mati Waiya: [“Don’t Trade This Wild River for a Dirty Power Plant”](#)
- Union of Concerned Scientists: [“Environmental Impacts of Natural Gas”](#)
- *Los Angeles Times* investigation into [California’s recent power plant glut](#) and editorial [“The beginning of the end of big, climate-changing power plants in California”](#)



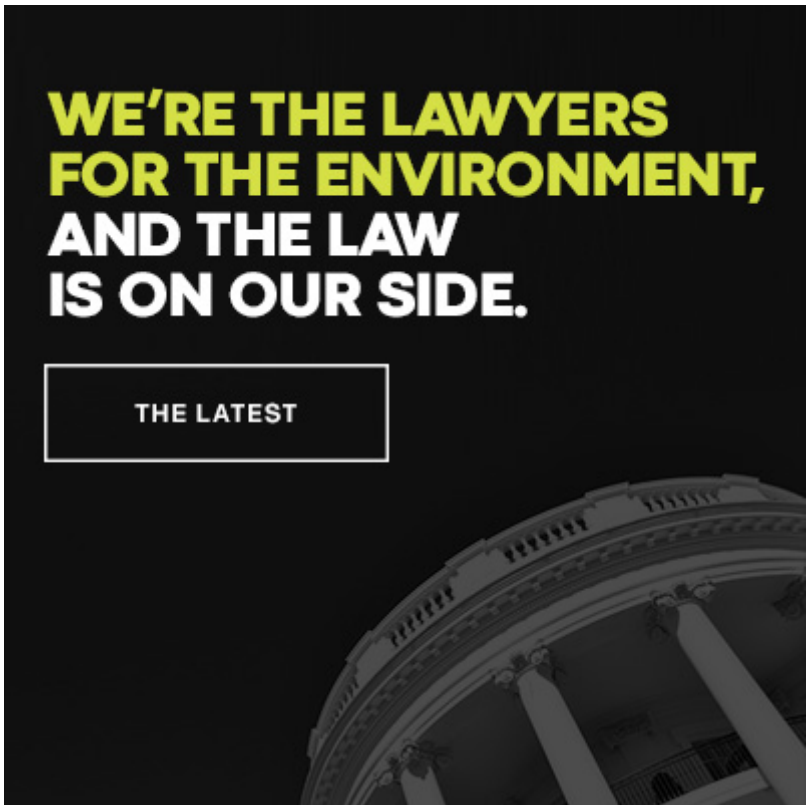
**The *Utom*, the Santa Clara River.**

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## **CONTACTS**

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*Advocacy Campaign*  
**THE RIGHT TO ZERO**

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*“For more than a decade, environmental justice advocates have been at the forefront of calling for zero-emission technologies to clean up our ports, rail yards, bus depots and warehouses.”*

**– ADRIAN MARTINEZ**  
Staff Attorney, California Office

**THE STORIES TO READ ON RIGHT TO ZERO**

[Can California Meet Its Electric Trucks Goals?](#)

[Environmental Voices Team Up with Teamsters to Fight Rumored Amazon Airport Terminal in California’s Inland Empire](#)



[Demand the Transition to 100% Clean Energy](#)

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[La Contaminación Del Aire Hace Que El Coronavirus Sea Más Letal](#)

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