



Advancing Environmental Justice at the Port of Hueneme

TOOLS FOR A JUST TRANSITION

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Abbreviations

CAUSE	Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy
OGV	Ocean Going Vessel
PM	Particulate Matter
NO_x	Nitrogen Oxides
SO_x	Sulfur Oxides
BC	Black Carbon
VOCs	Volatile Organic Compounds
O₃	Ozone
CO	Carbon Monoxide
CO₂	Carbon Dioxide
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CFROG	Climate First: Replacing Oil and Gas
VCAPCD	Ventura County Air Pollution Control District
CSUCI	California State University Channel Islands
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
OSW	Offshore Wind
ISR	Indirect Source Rule
WAIRE	Warehouse Actions and Investments to Reduce Emissions
SOAR	Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources
CBA	Community Benefits Agreement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Port of Hueneme is one of the defining landmarks of Ventura County, acting as a gateway to goods from across the world for a large part of the Central California Coast, as it is the only deep water port between Los Angeles and San Francisco. This prominent piece of infrastructure is a significant source of jobs and acts as an economic engine for the region; however, due to the quantity of Port traffic, it also is one of the largest sources of toxic air pollutants and greenhouse gases in the region. Although few direct emissions stem from the facilities on site, the port acts as an indirect source of emissions from the various pieces of equipment used for operations of the Port such as cranes and forklifts, while also requiring many marine vessels, diesel trucks, rail, and airplanes to facilitate the transport of goods.¹ The pollution caused by these direct mobile sources is a significant contributor to the poor air quality and subsequent elevated levels of respiratory diseases and related cancers for the cities of Port Hueneme and Oxnard.

Our vision is this: a port that not only serves economic interests, but one that actively engages with the community, engages in equitable development, prevents pollution from hurting neighboring communities by adopting policies to eliminate air pollution, reduces its carbon footprint, and mitigates hazards caused by transportation. We believe that the Port of Hueneme can serve as an example of not just a green transition, but a *just transition*, one that respects the needs of working class people to have healthy neighborhoods and a just world, while also protecting their ability to feed their families and have thriving homes. The uncertain times we live in require bold action, and we believe our communities are up to the task to steward our region through the historic upheaval we are currently experiencing.



Photo sourced from portofhueneme.org²

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INTRODUCTION

The Port of Hueneme sits at the edge of the Oxnard Plain on traditionally Chumash lands, with the name Hueneme derived from “Wene Me”, a word from the nearly extinct Ventureño dialect of Chumash meaning “resting place”.^{3,4} Wene Me was traditionally used as a base for fishing expeditions to Anacapa Island and a resting point for travel along the coast. After colonization and the subsequent decimation of the Chumash people from Spanish, Mexican, and American rule and European diseases,⁵ the port came into existence with the rise of Ventura County’s early agricultural sector, first being created as a humble 1000-foot wharf in 1872 by Thomas R. Bard to facilitate shipping.⁶ Over time, the Port would modernize and expand,

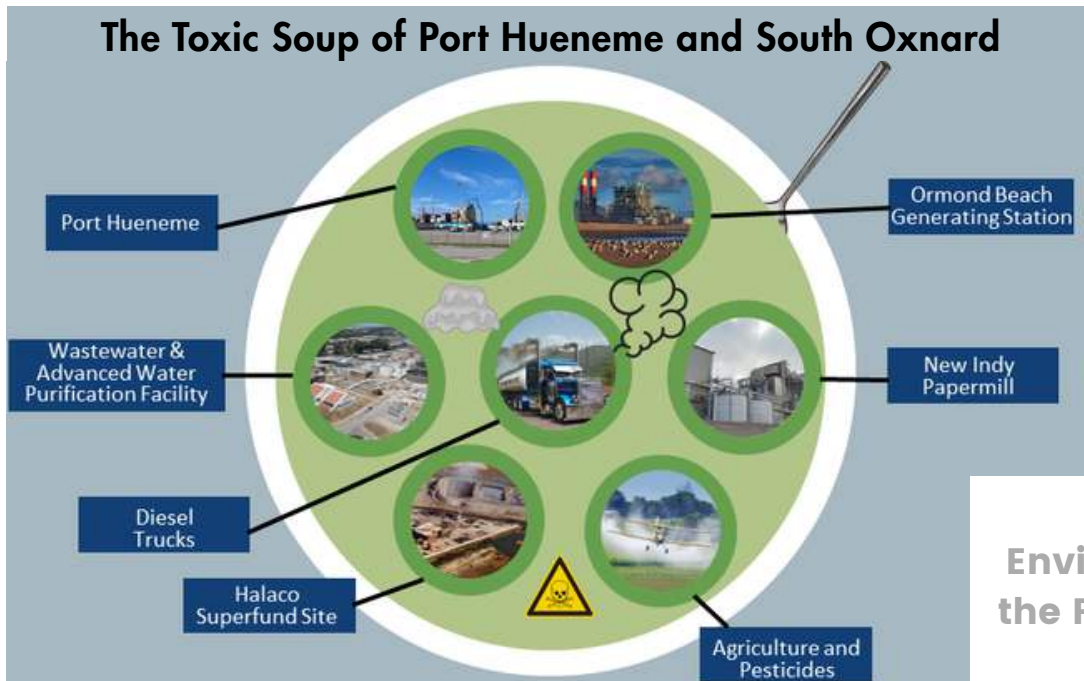


Photo sourced from portofhueneme.org²

and, not only servicing the agricultural sector, but also becoming a major importer of produce, cars, and household goods while also acting as a Naval Base. Now, the Port has eclipsed the original vision of Bard, serving as an economic engine for the region by facilitating over \$15 billion in annual trade value and \$2.8 billion in local economic impact and acting as a major source of economic stability and jobs. However, as is the nature with many large industrial sectors, the Port is also a major source of toxic air pollutants as well as greenhouse gases, as the regional economic engine requires a constant stream of ocean going vessels (OGVs), trains, diesel-powered drayage trucks to haul freight, and a variety of dock equipment including cranes, forklifts, and personal vehicles to run daily operations. This plethora of mechanized equipment have an outsized-effect on local communities, particularly the Cities of Port Hueneme and Oxnard, with port-operated parking lots and major transportation corridors crossing neighborhoods exposing residents to airborne pollutants including black carbon, particulate matter, and NO_x spewed from diesel trucks. These pollutants contribute to what has been locally called a “toxic soup” of industry, leading to elevated rates of asthma, pulmonary diseases, cancers, and heart diseases. This “toxic soup” is comprised of a wide range of industry including power plants, toxic waste sites, paper-processing plants, sewage treatment plants, and agriculture, each contributing to the reduction in quality of life and lifespans of the fenceline communities of Port Hueneme and South Oxnard.

Standing out amongst industrial polluters is the Port of Hueneme. While it doesn’t bear the sole responsibility for all of the

The Toxic Soup of Port Hueneme and South Oxnard



Toxic Soup Artwork made by CAUSE Youth and Young Adult Leaders

pollution, it has positioned itself as a leading socioeconomic and political force in the community and Ventura County and thus bears responsibility for leading the industrial-scale clean up of toxic industry byproducts in our communities. Tackling this detoxification and the environmental and public health issues caused by Port and freight operations requires navigation through a complex set of regulatory bodies that span federal, state, and local agencies, as well as stakeholders from labor, business, and the non-profit sector. To address these issues, we must employ the values of environmental justice by ensuring everyone shares *not only the benefits, but the costs and responsibilities* of Port impacts. This will require a bold reimagining of decision-making processes, centering community education and decision making to create lasting change.

Environmental injustice in a global economy

Our current global economic system is built on supply chains connecting the resources, labor, and production capacity of every corner of the globe. This system optimizes for profit, finding the cheapest combinations of natural resources, workforces, and industry to deliver goods at the highest rates of return for owners and shareholders. One cannot argue that it is not effective in its purpose, maximizing profit; however, this is done by externalizing costs that the public typically has to pay for. Externalized costs show up in various forms; sometimes as corporations finding countries that have more lax environmental standards for mining leading to poisoned water supplies. Other times it is sweatshops filled with workers toiling for 16-hour days in factories that have suicide nets. And stateside, it can show up as filling a low-income neighborhood with industrial facilities that poison the air. This is what we mean by environmental injustice, the focusing of profits and benefits in the hands of the few while the public at large has to deal with the exorbitant public health and environmental costs while having little to no say in decision making processes. These systems must be reimagined and recreated.

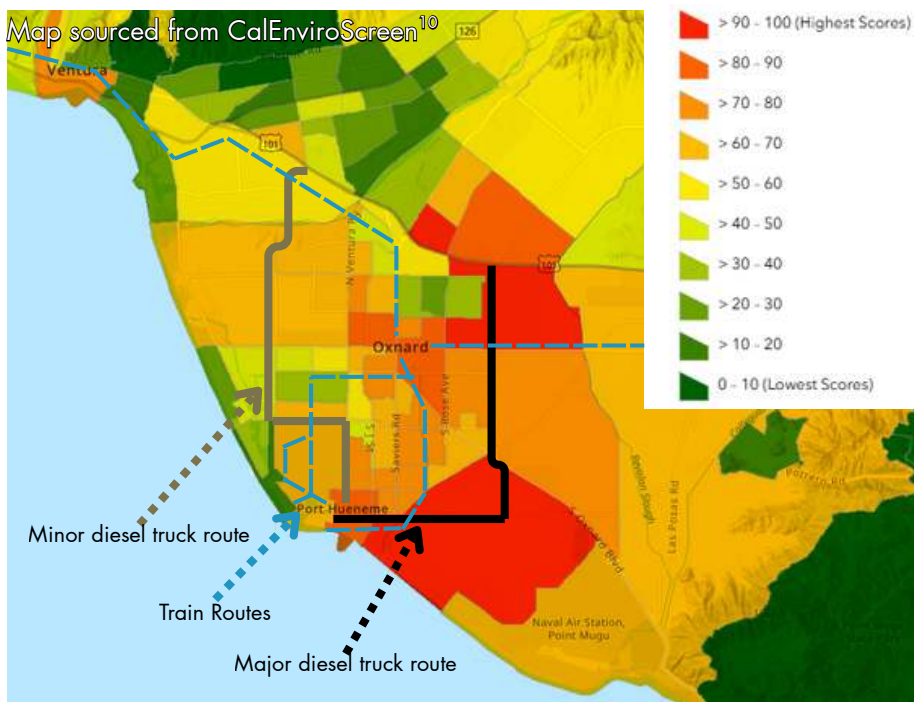
The Port of Hueneme sits as a nexus point of the global supply chain, connecting goods from across the world to states in the western U.S. as well as portions of Southwestern Canada.⁷ The primary imports are automobiles, heavy equipment, fruits and vegetables, and fertilizers. The major Port customers for vehicles use a 34-acre parking lot offsite from the Port in South Oxnard and they consist of Wallenius-Wilhelmsen Services, GLOVIS America, BMW North America, MINI, Rolls Royce, Hyundai, Kia, Volvo, Jaguar, Land Rover, Maserati, Aston Martin, Mitsubishi, General Motors, Honda, Toyota, Nissan, Tesla, Subaru, Ford, and Polestar. The major heavy equipment customers are Caterpillar, John Deere, New Holland, Case, and Hyster. Lastly, the major agricultural and fertilizer customers are Chiquita, Del Monte Fresh, Mission Produce, Five Diamond Cold Storage, Sun Fresh International, Allied Potato, Driscoll's, Naturipe, Wo-nderful, and Yara. These companies make billions of dollars cumulatively, with the Port facilitating the movement of goods that serve corporate bank accounts while requiring residents to bear the burdens of this industry.

So what does this environmental injustice look like locally? Oxnard and Port Hueneme are ranked as the 56th worst metropolitan area out of ~19,500 U.S. cities with asthma according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America,⁸⁻⁹ despite a favorable environment with relatively temperate weather and consistent onshore breezes that would mitigate the effects of air pollution. The cause of this dubious ranking is multifaceted but has large contributions from the "toxic soup", which is clearly visualized through a map

Major companies that are customers or tenants at the Port of Hueneme



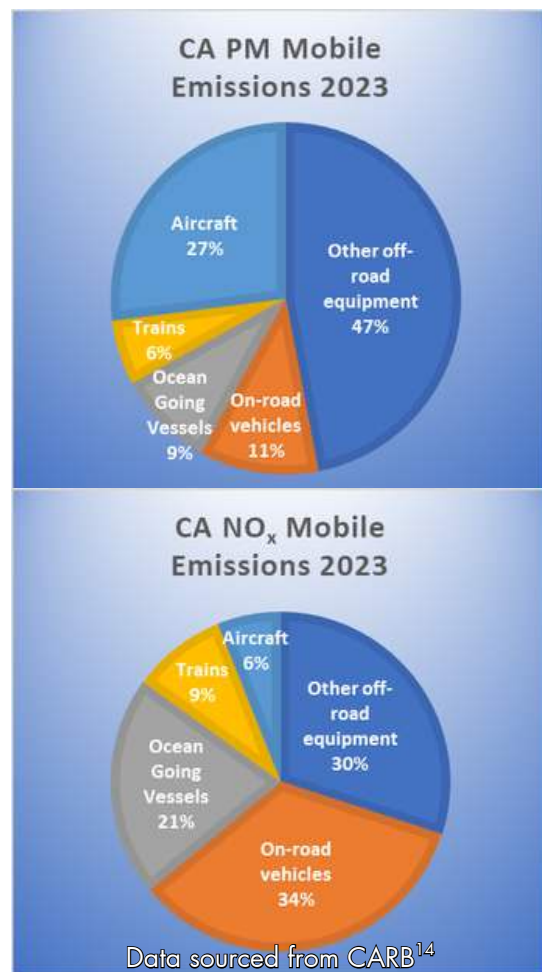
Oxnard is ranked as the 56th worst city in the U.S. to live in with asthma, despite a climate that naturally reduces air pollution



from CalEnviroScreen, a tool developed by the state of California to compare pollution burdens across the state.¹⁰ As shown in the map to the left, large portions of Oxnard and the City of Port Hueneme are in the 80th or 90th percentiles of statewide pollution. The area of the “toxic soup”, the southernmost area along Hueneme Road, is part of the major truck and rail route out of the Port, with these areas bearing some of the highest burdens in California. These neighborhoods have experienced long histories of segregation, exclusionary housing policies, and marginalized participation in decision-making processes.¹¹ *This is what environmental injustice looks like locally* - communities with limited political power forced to bear the externalized costs of pollution while corporations profit.

Air Pollution, The Invisible Killer

To truly understand the impact on communities by ports, we must take a look at the various pollutants and their sources. As aforementioned, ports - as indirect sources - require on-site equipment such as cranes and forklifts, as well as a vast fleet of drayage trucks, OGVs, and rail traffic, mobile sources, to transport products arriving in the global supply chain to their final destinations. These vehicles cause the production of a large amount of air pollutants: particulate matter of various size (PM), nitrous oxides (NO_x), sulfur oxides (SO_x), black carbon (BC), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), ozone (O₃), and carbon monoxide (CO) amongst others.¹² These chemicals have major health impacts causing asthma, lung disease, birth defects, cancer, and exacerbating heart diseases, sometimes even causing heart attacks. In addition to the public health impacts, these types of emissions have long-term environmental impacts, acidifying waterways and rain, depleting nutrients in the soil, damaging agricultural crops, and hurting lifeforms up and down the ecosystem. And adding to the acute localized damage, there is also the production of a significant amount of greenhouse gases during operations, primarily carbon dioxide (CO₂), contributing to a warming planet and climate change, with Ventura County being one of the fastest warming counties in the lower 48 states.¹³ Port operations are large contributors to these pollutants (as seen in the charts to the right with data provided by the California Air Resources Board, CARB)¹⁴, with OGVs, diesel trucks, cranes, forklifts, and other off-road equipment being major contributors to PM and NO_x. Some of these pollutants from OGVs are mitigated through the employment of filtering technology provided by the company STAX¹⁵ (shown below hooking up to an OGV exhaust) and shore provided power, but this is not uniformly employed and does not address OGVs in transit. Lastly, there is also the deployment of VOCs as fumigants such as methyl bromide,¹⁶ a highly toxic, ozone-depleting gas, which is commonly used when shipping agricultural products for pest control.



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Common Air Pollutants from Port Activities



Photo taken by Alex J. Mantanona

Diesel Death Zones

One of the primary drivers of air pollution is diesel fuel, the energy source used to drive OGVs, drayage trucks, and off-road vehicles. The damage these pollutants cause is severe, particularly in industrialized areas that are heavily populated, which as previously mentioned are often low-income and comprised of underrepresented communities. Diesel emissions are a slow poison, doing gradual, cumulative damage that show up as worsening asthma symptoms, wheezing coughs, birth defects, heart and lung disease, and community elders dying prematurely. This type of exhaust is responsible for about 70% of cancer risk related to air toxins in California.¹⁷ These public health impacts are another roadblock for these communities to have an equitable life, with hospital bills, inhalers, and medication costs adding to day-to-day burdens that prevent them from living fulfilling lives.¹⁸ To put a monetary value on this type of burden is a gross simplification of the problem, but estimates show that diesel pollution is expected to cost Ventura County residents over \$335 million in public health costs in 2026.¹⁹ Combining these costs with the recent spike in diesel fuel prices caused by the Iran War, a transition away from diesel not only make sense from a public health and environmental perspective, but a financial perspective as well.

Air Monitoring

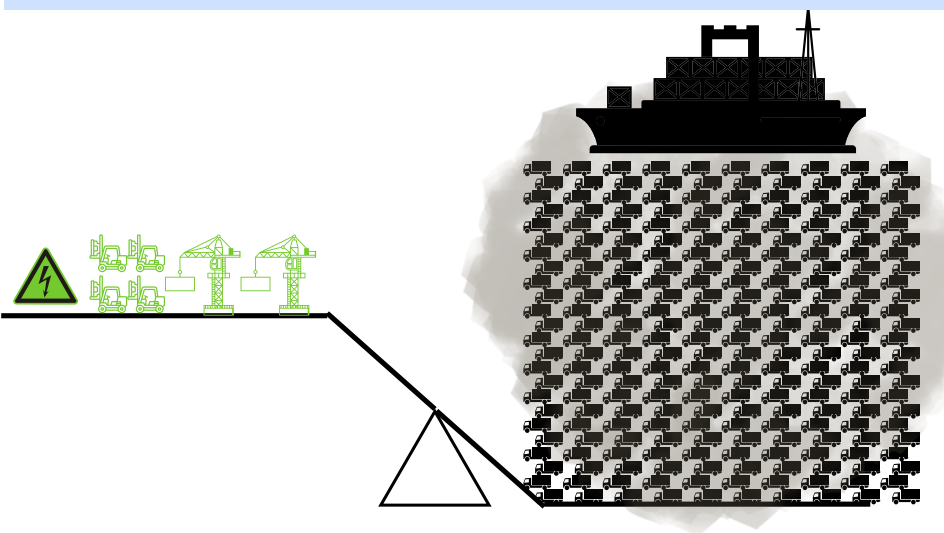
In order to quantify the pollution burdens faced by fenceline communities, there have been efforts to monitor air quality in neighborhoods and pollution hot spots across the country. In prior years, CAUSE has partnered with academic partners at the Community and Environmental Research Lab now located at UC Irvine to engage in truck counting and air monitoring using handheld devices. This type of citizen science can provide crucial information and data, but without consistent deployment paired with advanced equipment, the data generated has significant gaps for policy makers. Recently, several projects using more advanced equipment have been deployed in Ventura County. Locally, these efforts have been led by Climate First: Replacing Oil and Gas (CFROG), a local nonprofit that has partnered with the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD), California State University Channel Islands (CSCUCI), and industry (including the Port of Hueneme) to deliver much-needed localized data by tapping into EPA and CARB funding. Most of the monitors have been employed for less than a year and will require time for data collection, but some initial conclusions can be made by reviewing the data provided by the onsite BC monitor which the Port has been operating since late 2022.²⁰ The Oxnard Harbor District has set a goal of electrifying all Port equipment by 2030, and has been upgrading its cranes, forklifts, and other Port equipment. As a community organization we applaud the Port on their efforts; however, we recognize that consistent accountability is required to make and

***Diesel Exhaust is
"responsible for about
70% of cancer risk
related to air toxins in
California" and will cost
Ventura County residents
~\$335 million in health
costs in 2026***

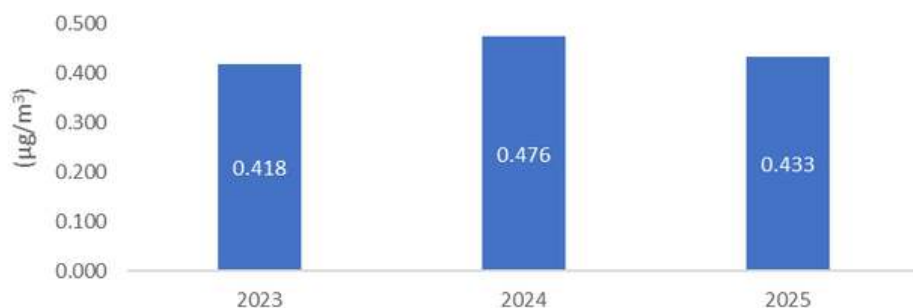
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Even with all port-owned equipment being electrified, the balance of pollution still leans toward other equipment not being addressed.

This shows up in the annual BC data seen below, with no significant drops over the past several years



BC 1-Hr Concentration Annual Average



maintain the significant changes that are needed to make meaningful impacts on local public health. Even with all port-owned equipment being electrified, the balance of pollution still leans toward other equipment - diesel trucks, OGVs, and rail - which are not being addressed. This shows up in the annual BC data seen to the left, with no significant drops over the past several years.

Time will tell how effective pollution-reducing efforts will be, but now with multiple monitors deployed locally, we will be able to effectively track the work being done. There are two main projects: a Black Carbon monitoring project which has employed four BC monitors with one onsite at the Port, one at Haycox Elementary in the City of Port Hueneme close to the drayage route of Port Hueneme Road, one in La Colonia neighborhood close to local agricultural factories in Oxnard, and the last at the Oxnard Union High School District office by the 101 freeway on Rice Ave, one of the major roads used by drayage trucks. The second project, titled "My People, My Air", employed monitors that track ozone, VOCs, PM, and NO_x at new sites along Port Hueneme Road, in La Colonia, at CSUCI, and at a VCAPCD site in the unincorporated neighborhood of El Rio just north of Oxnard. These monitors and the data they provide will be powerful tools, and CFROG has done an exemplary job of activating and centering community voices through the use of Community Advisory Councils (CACs) that have made significant contributions to these projects.

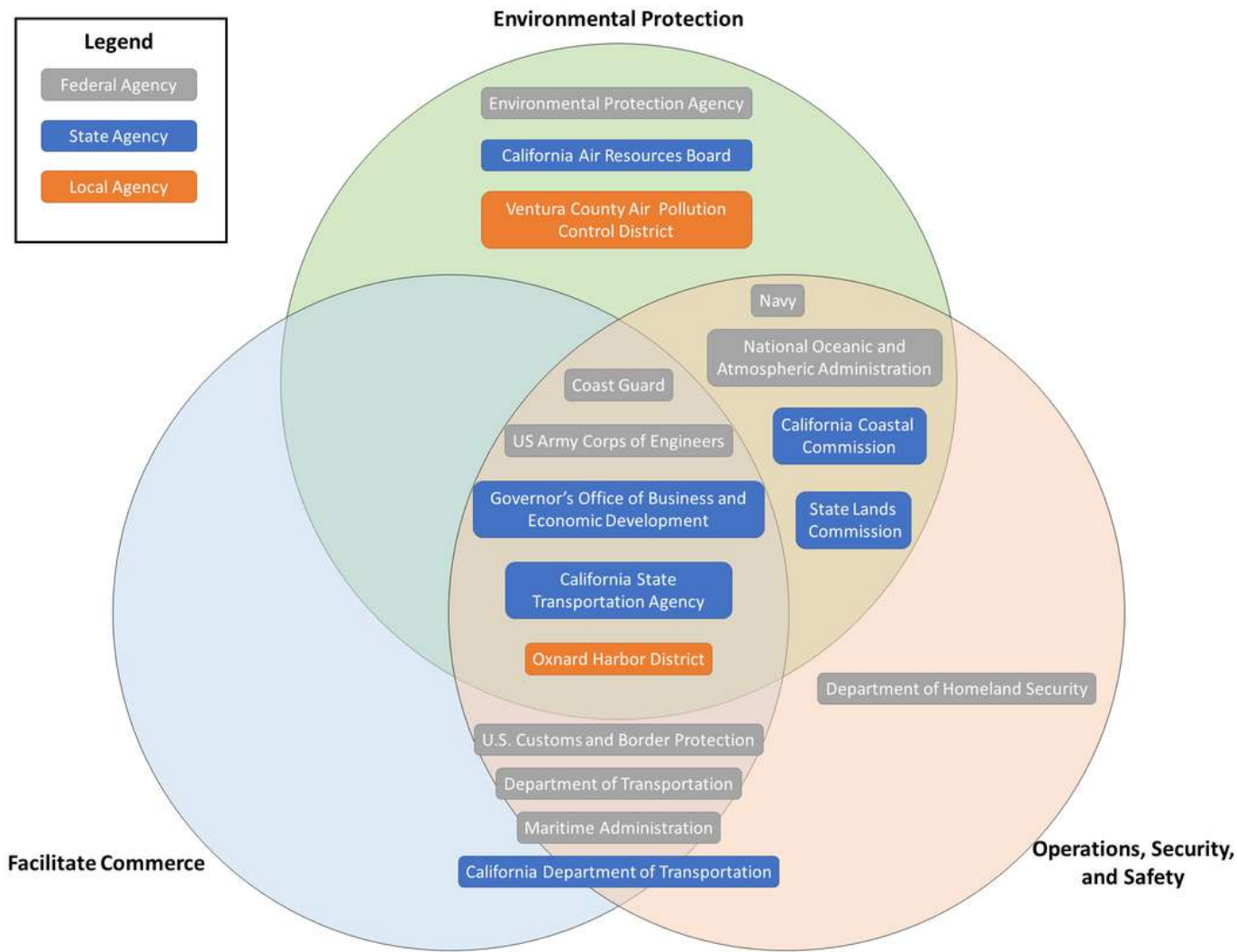
Regulatory Bodies of the Port of Hueneme

There are multiple federal, state, and municipal regulatory bodies that affect the Port of Hueneme. These agencies have three main focal points of regulation: 1) environmental protection, 2) facilitation of commerce, and 3) ensuring effective operations, security, and safety. Additionally, although not directly governed by either city, the Port of Hueneme also is closely tied to both Oxnard and the City of Port Hueneme, as their extended operation facilities and tenants are subject to many local laws. All three aspects of regulation are vital to our community's wellbeing; however, the vast scope of regulations is more than can be covered in this document. Instead, we will focus on state and local agencies, with particular attention paid to the California Air Resources Board, the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD), and the locally-elected Oxnard Harbor District. CARB and VCAPCD are the two primary agencies in charge of regulating and monitoring air quality in Ventura County

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with CARB deriving its authority from the state and VCAPCD from the county. Given the biggest public health concerns originate with this type of pollution, their roles are crucial in delivering clean air to our communities. While these two agencies will be crucial for providing levers to pull in defending communities (with detailed examples below), the actual day-to-day operations and daily governance of the Port is controlled by the Oxnard Harbor District, a five-member board that is locally-elected. This board governs the staff of the Port and directs operations, having a directive given by the electorate to manage the port in benefit for the local community. It is within these three regulatory bodies that we believe positive change can most likely occur.



Tools and Issues for a Just Transition

How do we move forward and deliver a just transition? This is the key question of this policy brief. Despite the environmental injustice that is affecting these communities, there are clear benefits that arise from operating a Port locally. The exchange of goods and services, the union jobs, and the regional economic stability allow for economic mobility and improving qualities of life. The focus as we move forward is not to be punitive, but to find solutions to the real health, environmental, and financial harms that are being done to local communities by Port-facilitated industry. What is presented below is a non-exhaustive list of possible solutions, as well as some questions, to be used by the community as we advocate for a more just world.

Community Organizing

Every tool presented in the policy toolbox below is meaningless without skilled hands to use them. As an organization, we believe in the competence of the people, which can be strengthened by building grassroots power through community organizing, leadership development, coalition building, civic engagement, policy research, and advocacy. If we intend on delivering a just transition to the Central Coast, then community organizing needs to be at

its heart. Community organizing shifts the balance away from profit as the sole-driver of decision-making and moves it toward a more just and democratic system by listening to the power of the people. Any conversation about a just transition starts by actively engaging with local communities and giving them the tools and knowledge on how to use them to affect change.

Proposition 4 Funding

In November of 2024, California voters approved Proposition 4, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024. This Proposition authorized \$10 billion in funds backed by gen-

eral obligation bonds by the State of California to fund water security, disaster mitigation, and environmental infrastructure projects.²¹ Prop 4 has the capacity to create significant momentum in the push for environmental justice by catalyzing green job creation and green industry development. These funds - managed by the California Natural Resources Agency, Department of Water Resources, State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Energy Commission - will provide grants to cities, regional entities, tribal governments, and non-profit organizations. There are many opportunities for new technologies and infrastructure to be developed as a result of this publicly available money: new sources of energy to power electric trucking, battery storage, and transmission line upgrades to name a few. As these resources are deployed to spur the transition away from a fossil fuel based economy, it is important that the historical mistakes of industrialization not be repeated. One particular energy source that has received funding from Prop 4 that will need vigilance during its development, and has a direct connection to ports, is Offshore Wind Power.

Offshore Wind (OSW)

As California and the nation at large attempt to tackle the climate crisis and transition away from fossil fuels energy - an energy source that emits poisons into our air and heats the planet to a dangerous level for human life - there are many efforts in finding sources of energy with significantly lower environmental impact. One of the potential answers is the development of OSW farms off of the coast, with the state setting aside over \$475 million in Prop 4 funding to advance OSW. California has set ambitious energy goals around OSW that would require at least four staging and integration sites as well as eight operations and maintenance sites by 2045 according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.²² The Port of Hueneme has been identified as a potential site for operations and maintenance, meaning that the Port would need to build out the infrastructure to be able to perform standard maintenance on wind turbines and fix damaged equipment. This would have significant impacts on the local environment and economy. On one hand, these projects can alleviate the worst of the climate crisis, provide renewable and affordable energy to our communities, act as a replacement career for displaced oil workers, and be a significant driver of jobs and economic growth in the region. On the other hand, OSW will have impacts on marine life and bir-

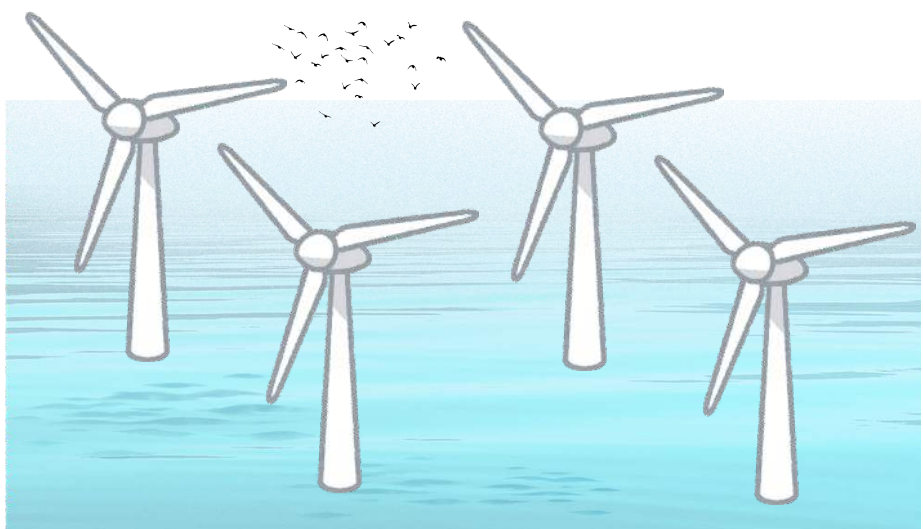


Photo of CAUSE leaders organizing for coastal access taken by CAUSE staff

ds, will require a new type of industrialization, and may require localized impacts even if developed responsibly. As an organization, CAUSE believes that OSW should be developed off of the coast of California in a responsible fashion as the benefits seem to outweigh the harms; however, we believe this decision and its implementation should be led with community guidance and partnership to not repeat the mistakes of the past.



Photo of diesel truck on Port Hueneme Road taken by CAUSE staff

Clean Truck Programs and Container Fees from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach

A potential beneficiary of Prop 4 and OSW development is the trucking industry as it moves away from diesel and transitions to electric trucks. These upgrades will be costly and will require charging and utility infrastructure upgrades. While Prop 4 and OSW will address some of these issues, there is a need for other policies to supplement the amount of investment that needs to take place. We can look to our neighbors in Los Angeles and the Inland Empire for some possible policy mechanisms that will address the shortfall.

In 2008, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach launched their Clean Truck Program, part of the San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan.²³⁻²⁴ By 2012, the Ports had claimed the program was responsible for a 90% reduction in air pollution emissions from drayage trucks from the Ports. This plan was updated several times, and by April of 2022, the Clean Truck Fund Rate was implemented to create a fund which could be used to help the trucking industry replace polluting diesel vehicles with near-zero and zero-emission trucks. This program works by charging cargo owners \$10-\$20 for every container loaded onto trucks. By January 2026, the program was responsible for collecting approximately \$149 million, and had helped the acquisition of over 350 electric trucks as well as over 300 charging stations constructed or under construction. A similar program used in Ventura County would surely improve the quality of air while helping truck drivers transition to zero emission vehicles without the financial burden of upgrading falling solely on individual drivers or businesses.

Indirect Source Rules (ISRs) and the California Clean Skies Act

An ISR is a regulation used to clean up air pollution from a central location that isn't directly responsible for the pollution caused. These are typically storage and transportation hubs, such as ports, warehouses, and rail yards, with the pollution coming from mobile sources that travel in and out of these centers spreading harm across large areas. Implementation of ISRs vary based on location, but as an example of the effectiveness of ISRs, the Warehouse Actions and Investments to Reduce Emissions Program (WAIRE) enacted in Southern California in 2021 resulted in a drop of 1.47 tons of NO_x emissions per day by 2024 in the Inland Empire, over 800 zero-emission trucks purchased, and funding the installation of enough solar panels to power 50,000 homes annually, all while economic growth continued despite fears the regulation would drive business down.²⁵ This was a local regulation passed by the South Coast Air Quality Monitoring District, and for it to be effective in Ventura County, it would have to be implemented statewide as VCAPCD does not have authority to regulate mobile sources; thus, the

regulation would have to come from CARB. In order to protect more communities from harmful emissions and to help with the transition, Assemblymember Robert Garcia introduced the California Clean Skies Act (AB 1777) in February of 2026.²⁶ Although the bill didn't pass this year, it would affirm that CARB has the authority to implement ISRs statewide which would lead to the ability to implement a port-specific ISR and bring these health and economic benefits across the state.



Photo of electric truck charging station and diesel traffic close to the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles taken by Alex J. Mantanona

CARB Advocacy

As mentioned before, CARB is one of the key regulatory agencies that affect Port operations and they play an outsized role on indirect source regulation as VCAPCD doesn't have the authority to regulate mobile sources of pollutants in the county. Thanks to consistent advocacy by environmental justice organizations, fenceline communities, scientists, environmental groups, and public workers and officials, state agencies have become increasingly more aware and responsive to the burdens faced across California. In CARB's case, this has manifested in several initiatives that will help pave the way towards environmental justice. These include the Drive Forward program,²⁷ focused on electrification of vehicles, Cap-and-Invest (formerly Cap-and-Trade),²⁸ a program that taxes carbon emissions to invest in new infrastructure, OGV At Berth and a potential In-Transit rule,²⁹ regulations meant to reduce pollution from OGVs, and lastly the CARB Scoping Plan in 2027, a comprehensive plan used by the State to reach zero climate emissions. These regulations will require community organizing, advocacy, and input in order to best serve our people, and without engagement they will default to a top-down approach without truly understanding the communities these regulations should be protecting. CARB is currently seeking community input and is having staff perform outreach on these regulations through workshops, distributing grants, and working with various stakeholders throughout the next few years during implementation. These will be far from perfect processes and will require conflict and compromise with industries benefiting from the status quo, but with effective community organizing, we can fight for just policies to protect our communities.



250-Acre Port Expansion

One potential development that will have major impacts on Oxnard and Port Hueneme is a potential 250-acre Port expansion project that the Port wishes to develop into an "Enterprise Opportunity Zone". This site will potentially be located along Port Hueneme Road in what is now agricultural land, requiring annexation from county control to the City of Oxnard before rezoning to allow for industrial development. The Port claims in their 10-year strategic plan published in 2023 that this site will be used to "enhance the Port's ability to increase its economic development... create educational opportunities," and "meet its environmental stewardship goals by investment in zero emission and clean technologies," amongst other goals.³⁰ Again, we raise the challenge to the Port to engage with community on this development. A prior 34-acre site led to increased traffic and pollution along Port Hueneme Road and angered many local residents.³¹ How does developing an "Enterprise Opportunity Zone" work with the Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) program that is in place in Ventura County?³² Do our neighborhoods actually want this agricultural land to be developed as another industrial site? Do all 250-acres have to be industrialized, or can portions be allocated for affordable housing and green spaces? What educational opportunities will there be? Will there be workforce development and how many union jobs will be created? How does OSW and electric charging infrastructure fit into this? These are the conversations that need to be had to ensure environmental justice, and development should not proceed without community-centered decisions.



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Conclusion: Environmental Justice Means Community at the Forefront

The next few years of decisions will have major impacts on the City of Port Hueneme, Oxnard, and Ventura County at large. The Port will be a central part of any development moving forward, whether that is engaging with OSW, being a catalyst for electric truck and infrastructure adaptation, or spurring economic development of the region. Whatever decisions are made, we have the chance to change the unjust practices of the past by being led by the wisdom of our communities. Environmental justice means that communities have the choice to opt in or out of projects, and the obligation to provide responsible proposals that benefit community lies on developers. As a regional leader, the Port owes its neighboring communities transparency, engagement, and compensation for the burdens it places on those who live in these heavily polluted areas.

Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs)

Spurred by a lawsuit by the City of Port Hueneme in the 2010's, the Port created a Community Benefit Fund that allocates \$100,000/yr to a fund managed by the City and Port for community improvements.³³ Around this same time, the Port also began increasing its charitable donations and public relations efforts as both the City and community felt their outreach was lacking. These efforts have grown, with an additional \$345,000 donated outside of the fund to local communities in this past fiscal year alone. Again, we will not chastise the Port when it is doing good work. What we will ask, is that the Port, and any other industrial developer, engages the community with intentionality, whether that is through CACs that have decision-making power, in the same way that CFROG has done, or through Project Labor Agreements and Workforce Development Programs that incorporate the ideas of environmental justice and a just transition. Preferably, any developments should come with a CBA, legally binding agreements that ensure benefits go to those that are most affected by pollution burdens. These should be guided by long-term vision that leads to sustained health and economic benefits for those impacted. Additionally, the Port, and community at large, should think about what investments could lift up the local population, whether that is legal aid for immigrants, affordable housing advocacy, or whatever else the community determines would best serve its needs.

A People's Plan

This is the time to be bold in our decision making. Rather than a few well-connected people deciding the future of entire communities behind closed doors, our region should come together and decide what we want together. We need to engage community members, labor groups, elected officials, government employees, businesses, and non-profits and decide how to chart a path forward. The upcoming decisions around OSW, transitioning away from fossil fuel infrastructure, battery-storage projects, transportation, reducing industrial pollution from the "toxic soup", and economic development will have generational consequences. We need to trust that communities can make decisions regarding their future by drawing on intergenerational wisdom and balancing technical knowledge with lived experiences to create a world where environmental justice is not just a dream, but a reality. We end this Policy Brief with a proposition and a challenge, not just to the Port of Hueneme but to our community at large: let's come together and make A People's Plan. This will be our vision of the future, a future where the people

overcome the challenges of pollution and climate change, one that centers economic and environmental justice through accessible employment and union jobs, and a future that balances responsible development with strong environmental regulations and protections. It is this type of plan, done together, that will lead to environmental justice and a better future for all.

CAUSE

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Photo of CAUSE leaders at Ormond Beach taken by CAUSE staff

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