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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Aera Listens to Community Views on East Cat Canyon Project**

SANTA MARIA – A large coalition of labor and community leaders plan to support Aera Energy’s East Cat Canyon Oil Field Redevelopment project at this evening’s public hearing to take comments on the draft environmental impact report (EIR) for the project.

“We are grateful for the Santa Barbara community’s strong support for our project, which will deliver essential energy while protecting the environment, said Cindy Pollard, Aera’s director of public affairs. “However, our main role tonight is to listen to the many points of view that are expressed,” she said.

The draft EIR is the culmination of nearly five years of work by the Santa Barbara County Planning Department to thoroughly analyze potential impacts of the project.

“We have demonstrated our commitment to listening and responding to concerns,” said Pollard. “County staff challenged us to reduce the footprint of our Project and its impact on oak trees. And we did. Our team went back to the drawing board and developed a Project Alternative that leaves 94% of the site undisturbed or preserved in a permanent Conservation Area.”

According to a report by the UC Santa Barbara Economic Forecast Project, Aera’s East Cat Canyon project will result in more than \$1 billion in economic activity and will create well-paying jobs for workers, as well as income for local businesses.

“We are proud to be associated with a project that will generate locally produced energy, at a facility built by local labor, that will create local jobs going forward,” said

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Michael G. Lopez, business manager of U.A. Plumbers and Pipefitters Union Local 114. “We enthusiastically look forward to Aera’s arrival in North Santa Barbara County.” In addition, the project will mean new tax revenues to support vital public services.

“Aera will become one of the largest property taxpayers in Santa Barbara County,” said Neil Gowing, president of the Santa Barbara County Deputy Sheriffs’ Association. “That’s new tax money that is desperately needed to fund vital services like public safety and our local schools.”

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