



809 Center Street, Room 10, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • (831) 420-5010 • Fax: (831) 420-5011 • [www.cityofsantacruz.com](http://www.cityofsantacruz.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 20, 2019

Contact: Ralph Dimarucut  
(831) 420-5017

## **Poll Shows Strong Support for Use of Lawsuits to Hold Fossil Fuel Companies Accountable**

SANTA CRUZ, CA – A recent survey conducted by Yale University’s Program on Climate Change Communications (YPCCC) and supported by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) shows that nearly two-thirds of Californians think fossil fuel companies should pay for some portion of global warming damages. Support jumps in many parts of the state, including in the Santa Cruz area, where nearly seven in ten support making oil and gas companies pay a portion of the costs.

“The Yale/UCS polling data shows that our local community supports the use of lawsuits to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for the impacts of climate change,” said Martine Watkins, mayor of Santa Cruz. “Decades of opportunities to develop clean alternatives to fossil fuel consumption have passed our communities by, and cities like Santa Cruz are committed to pursuing climate justice.”

“These poll results show strikingly widespread public support for the principle of ‘polluter pays’—that fossil fuel companies should be held responsible to pay for the climate mess they have created,” said Peter Frumhoff, director of science and policy and chief climate scientist at UCS. “For decades, fossil fuel companies knowingly misled the public about the climate risks of their products.” The poll found that two-thirds of people across the U.S. distrust fossil fuel companies. Frumhoff continued: “Communities across the nation now confront growing extreme weather and rising seas fueled by climate change—harms that could have been largely avoided had companies acted responsibly.”

The nationally representative [survey](#) asked Americans across the country their opinions about responsibility for global warming damages. YPCCC polled 5,131 adults in five waves from November 2018 to January 2019 and used a geographic and statistical model developed by its team of scientists to downscale public opinion results to the state, congressional district and county levels, which are searchable through this [interactive map](#).

June 20, 2019

Page 2

The poll found:

- Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of Californians think fossil fuel companies have either “a great deal” or “a moderate” amount of responsibility for the damages caused by global warming.
- The same proportion support making fossil fuel companies pay for a portion of the damages to local communities caused by carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels.
- Support for fossil fuel companies paying climate damages was highest in the following counties: San Francisco, Alameda, Marin, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Monterey and Yolo.
- Nearly six in ten Californians support local officials filing a lawsuit to make companies pay a portion of damages in an area. Support is roughly the same in Contra Costa, Marin, Oakland, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Cruz counties, where there are lawsuits against fossil fuel companies for climate damages.
- More than seven in ten (72 percent) Californians distrust fossil fuel companies.

On December 20, 2017, the City of Santa Cruz filed a lawsuit in the California Superior Court against 29 oil, gas, and coal companies in relation to their alleged contribution to climate change. Since then, a growing number of municipalities across the country have sued major oil and gas companies, including ExxonMobil, BP and Chevron, for knowingly contributing to property damage, public health impacts and climate adaptation costs.

In California alone, Oakland, San Francisco, Richmond, Santa Cruz and Imperial Beach, as well as three counties (Marin, San Mateo and Santa Cruz), have sued fossil fuel companies for damages from sea level rise and other impacts, seeking billions of dollars to pay for mitigation measures, such as sea walls, to protect coastal property.

The City of Santa Cruz is the county seat and largest city in Santa Cruz County. The City serves over 63,000 residents with full services including police, utility, waste, recreation, and library programs. Santa Cruz is a Charter City governed by a seven-member Council.

# # #