

DOCKETED

Docket Number:	24-OPT-02
Project Title:	Compass Energy Storage Project
TN #:	263756
Document Title:	Mary Locatelli Comments
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Mary Locatelli
Submitter Role:	Public
Submission Date:	6/3/2025 9:46:50 AM
Docketed Date:	6/3/2025

Comment Received From: Mary Locatelli
Submitted On: 6/3/2025
Docket Number: 24-OPT-02

CEC Docket 24-OPT-02

Attached is a letter I sent to Governor Newsom on this issue and thought you might like to see it.

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

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Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, California. 95814

June 3, 2025

Dear Governor Newsom:

I am a long-time resident of Laguna Beach California and am writing to express my strong opposition to the application submitted by Compass Energy Storage LLC to the California Energy Commission (CEC) for the proposed Compass Energy Storage Project in my neighboring City of San Juan Capistrano. This project would construct a 250-megawatt lithium ion battery energy storage system, and include among other things, transmission switchyards, lines and utility poles, in a current high wildfire risk area with close proximity to residential areas.

There are concerns about this project from a procedural perspective, a good governance perspective and a risk assessment and management perspective. Procedurally, the applicant submitted the application to the newly formed board after it had applied to and been rejected by the local government of jurisdiction. Further, the applicant failed to exhaust its administrative remedies either through appeal to the City or challenge in the courts, and the statute of limitations had expired. The applicant has now submitted essentially the same application to the newly formed State Board to have another go. It is unclear how this meets either the letter or intention of the statute forming the Board.

From a good governance perspective, this project does NOT have the support of the residents in the surrounding communities. At the last public meetings bipartisan voices in opposition to the project included Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley, Assemblywoman Diane Dixon, Assemblywoman Laurie Davies, Councilmembers from San Juan Capistrano and Councilmembers from Laguna Niguel, as well as over 100 residents. The main concern for residents is the location of a fire prone lithium battery storage system in a high wildfire risk environment and the impact it will have on 1) the safety of their homes and families in case of a fire, 2) the likelihood of increased home owners insurance premiums, if they can get insurance at all, 3) their property values, and 4) what it would mean to their lives and livelihoods should they find themselves in a situation similar to what the homeowners in the Palisades currently find themselves.

Finally, this is a high-risk project on many levels. In my career, I spent much time in the area of operational risk management. California is no stranger to wildfires. I personally lost a home to a wildfire almost 30 years ago. And if we need more recent reminders, we have Paradise, and now the Palisades and Altadena fires to maintain our focus. In Laguna Beach we currently have

an active Wildfire Safety and Mitigation Committee currently studying relevant issues, making recommendations to address them, and implementing plans to do so. It would be almost unconscionable for a State Board in Sacramento to force residents in San Juan Capistrano and Laguna Niguel (and likely to some extent in Laguna Beach) to allow a high fire risk lithium ion battery storage installation in a high fire risk area, with all the attendant risks to life and property.

Governor, you too regularly manage political risks in your chosen profession. I would suggest that another wildfire in Southern California may not be something you would want to deal with in your political future. Especially one that could have been easily avoided.

Please ask the CEC to reject this project (CEC Docket 24-OPT-02) and send it back to the local level where it belongs.

Best Regards,

Mary Locatelli
Laguna Beach