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Groundwater and Well Contamination Concerns

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the proposed Corby Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project, due to the significant and unacceptable risks it poses to local groundwater and private wells in the area.

The proposed site lies in a region where groundwater is not only a vital resource for residential, agricultural, and environmental uses, but also the primary source of drinking water for many nearby residents. The construction and operation of a large-scale battery energy storage system presents serious environmental hazards, especially given the nature and quantity of materials involved, including lithium-ion or other chemical battery technologies known to pose fire, leakage, and contamination risks.

Key Concerns:

Groundwater Contamination Risk from Chemical Leaks or Fires

BESS facilities carry a known risk of thermal runaway events, chemical leaks, and fire incidents. If battery fluids, fire suppression chemicals, or degraded materials enter the soil, they can leach into the groundwater, contaminating nearby wells and aquifers with toxic heavy metals and solvents.

Insufficient Hydrological and Geological Review

The current documentation for the project does not appear to include a thorough groundwater impact assessment, hydrogeological study, or contingency plan in the event of chemical spills or underground migration of contaminants. This is unacceptable given the number of private and agricultural wells within a close radius of the site.

Impact on Drinking Water and Agricultural Use

Any contamination of groundwater would pose a direct threat to public health, potentially rendering water from private wells unsafe for human consumption, livestock, or crop irrigation. The economic and health consequences of such contamination would be severe and long-lasting.

Lack of Emergency Response Infrastructure

In the event of a chemical release or fire, rural areas often lack the specialized hazardous materials response capabilities required to contain and mitigate the contamination quickly—further increasing the risk of groundwater impacts.

Precedent and Public Trust

Approving this project without robust environmental safeguards would undermine public

confidence in the state's environmental review process and set a troubling precedent for future projects in rural, groundwater-dependent communities.

Request for Action:

I respectfully urge the California Energy Commission to:

Reject the Corby BESS project in its current form, or

Require a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that includes detailed analysis of groundwater contamination risks, well monitoring, spill response plans, and long-term water quality mitigation strategies.

Prioritize public health and water security over industrial development in vulnerable groundwater basins.

Thank you for considering this urgent concern. I trust the Commission will take seriously its responsibility to protect California's critical water resources and the communities that depend on them.

Sincerely, Neil Serr