

**DOCKETED**

<b>Docket Number:</b>	21-AFC-02
<b>Project Title:</b>	Willow Rock Energy Storage Center
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<b>Document Title:</b>	Transcript of Public Hearing on Final Decision
<b>Description:</b>	Excerpts of transcript of December 19, 2025 CEC Business Meeting documenting the Public Hearing on the Final Decision.
<b>Filer:</b>	Renee Webster-Hawkins
<b>Organization:</b>	California Energy Commission
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## CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

In the matter of:

Business Meeting )  
 ) Docket No. 25-BUSMTG-01  
 )  
 \_\_\_\_\_

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2025

10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

In-person at:

CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES BUILDING  
715 P STREET  
FIRST FLOOR AUDITORIUM  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814  
(Wheelchair Accessible)

The California Energy Commission (CEC) aims to begin the business meeting promptly at the start time and the end time is an estimate based on the agenda proposed. The meeting may end sooner or later than the time indicated depending on various factors. Commissioners may attend remotely in accordance with Government Code section 11123.2(j).

Pursuant to the California Code of Regulations (CCR), title 20, section 1104(e), any person may make an oral comment on any agenda item. To ensure the orderly conduct of business, such comments will be limited to two minutes or less per person.

Please visit the CEC Business Meeting web page for more information and materials at <https://www.energy.ca.gov/proceedings/business-meetings>.

Reported by:  
Martha Nelson

APPEARANCES

COMMISSIONERS

David Hochschild, Chair

Siva Gunda, Vice Chair

J. Andrew McAllister, Commissioner

Noemi Gallardo, Commissioner

Nancy Skinner, Commissioner

STAFF

Drew Bohan, Executive Director

Jennifer Martin-Gallardo, Deputy Executive Director

Sanjay Ranchod, Chief Counsel

Yosef Saeed, Supervisor, Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division

Jared Babula, Senior Staff Counsel

Kaycee Chang, CEQA Project Management Unit Supervisor, Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division

PUBLIC ADVISOR'S OFFICE

Ryan Young, Deputy Public Advisor

PRESENTER

Seamus Murphy, San Francisco Bay Ferry

APPEARANCES

HEARING OFFICER

Renee Webster-Hawkins

APPLICANT - ITEM 6

Jeff Harris, Attorney, Climate Edge Law Group

Curt Hildebrand, Senior Vice President, Hydrostar

INTERVENORS

Zeynep Graves, Attorney, Center for Biological Resources

APPLICANT - ITEM 7

Derek Rieman, Repsol Renewables North America

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND TRIBES - ITEM 7

Yatch Bamford, Pit River Tribe

Brandy McDaniels, Pit River Tribe, Madesi Band

David Rickert, Executive Officer, Shasta County

Chris Kelstrom, District 5, Shasta County

PUBLIC COMMENT

Katy Morsony, California Community Choice Association

Charles Watson, Mainspring Energy

Katharine Larson, Sacramento Municipal Utility District

Tim Kamermayer, Green Hydrogen Coalition

APPEARANCES

PUBLIC COMMENT (CONT'D)

Elisabeth de Jong, Southern California Public Power Authority

Priscilla Quiroz, California Municipal Utilities Association

Susan Scheider, Large-scale Solar Association

Richard Chapman, Kern Economic Development Corporation

Anthony Myers, Safe Haven Kids League and Community Resources of California, and Safe Haven Kids League of California City

David Howlett

Neal Desai, National Parks Conservation Association

Joel MacKay, Rosamond Municipal Advisory Council

Erick Gamez, Antelope Valley Economic Development and Growth Enterprise

Corey Costelloe, City of Tehachapi

George Hodgkinson, Mojave Chamber of Commerce

Tim Johnson, ARB, Inc.

Shaleesha Ward, Pit River Tribe

Agnes Gonzalez, Pit River Tribe

Gregory Wolfin, Pit River Tribe

James Steadman, Pit River Tribe

Tony Yiamkis, Pit River Tribe

Conner Yiamkis, Pit River Tribe

APPEARANCES

PUBLIC COMMENT (CONT'D)

Awi Gustafson, Pit River Tribe

Michelle Lee, Pit River Tribe

Steve Kerns, District 3, Shasta County Planning  
Commissioner

Radley Davis, Hood River Nation

Natalie Forest-Perez, Pit River Tribe

John Gable, Moose Camp Community

Patrick Wallner

Morningstar Gali, International Indian Treaty Council

Sara Fitzsimon, Independent Energy Producers Association

Nancy Rader, California Wind Energy Association

Margaret Osa

Joseph Osa

Winterhawk Granillo, Pit River Tribe

Gill Wright, California Pilots Association

Oliver Forrest, Pit River Tribe

Steve Johnson

Crystal Miller, Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy

Trisha Valesquez, Save California Salmon

Theodore Martinez, Pit River Tribe

Consuela Vargas, Pit River Tribe

APPEARANCES

PUBLIC COMMENT (CONT'D)

Ashley Crystal Rojas, Indigenous Justice

Rachel Hatch

Ryan Baron, Best Best & Krieger LLP

Newmie Wilson, Hammawi Council, Pit River Tribe

Renee Gemmill, Pit River Tribe

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Adjournment	???

## PROCEDINGS

10:03 a.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2025

(Whereupon an introduction video is played and not transcribed.)

6 CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Good morning and welcome  
7 friends. I'm David Hochschild, Chair of the California  
8 Energy Commission. Today is December 19th. I call this  
9 meeting to order.

10                   Joining me are Commissioner McAllister,  
11 Commissioner Skinner, and Commissioner Gallardo. Vice  
12 Chair Gunda is in a meeting with the Governor's Office and  
13 will join us shortly.

14 Let's begin by standing for the Pledge of  
15 Allegiance.

16 (The Pledge of Allegiance is recited in unison.)

17 CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: We will begin with public  
18 comment and then move on to agency announcements.

19 MR. YOUNG: Good morning and welcome. This is  
20 Ryan Young, the Energy Commission's Deputy Public Advisor.

21                   The Commission welcomes public comment at its  
22 business meetings. There are going to be multiple  
23 opportunities for public comment today. This initial  
24 public comment period is for any informational or non-  
25 voting items on the agenda. If you'd like to make a

1                   CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Commissioner McAllister?

2                   COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Aye.

3                   CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Commissioner Skinner?

4                   COMMISSIONER SKINNER: Aye.

5                   CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: And I vote aye as well. That

6 item passes four to zero.

7                   We'll turn next to Item 6, Willow Rock Energy

8 Storage Application for Certification.

9                   and I'll welcome our Hearing Officer Renee

10 Webster-Hawkins to present from the dais and preside over

11 this public hearing.

12                  HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you,

13 Chair.

14                  First I think I'd like to recognize Executive

15 Director Bohan who has some comments at the outset of this

16 item.

17                  MR. BOHAN: Thank you. Appreciate that. Thank

18 you, Commissioners.

19                  Items 6 and 7, as you know, are projects where

20 developers are seeking approval or certification from the

21 CEC for projects. And before handing the mic back to

22 Hearing Officer Webster-Hawkins to discuss the Committee's

23 proposal, I wanted to briefly compare this item, the Willow

24 Rock item, with the next one on the agenda which is

25 Fountain Wind.

1           All the projects like this that come to us are  
2 unique, every one of them. They have different  
3 technologies. They're located in different environments  
4 throughout California. They impact different communities  
5 in different ways. And they also have different benefits.

6           Willow Rock, for example, is an innovative energy  
7 storage project located in a rural open space area of Kern  
8 County, and this was brought under our AFC process, our  
9 Application for Certification process, which we've been  
10 using for five decades and have really got a good sense of  
11 how to implement that.

12           The next project, the Fountain Wind Project by  
13 way of contrast is a wind energy project, as the name  
14 implies, that is located in a heavily forested area of  
15 Shasta County, so very different physical environments. It  
16 was filed under what we call the Opt-In process, and this  
17 was a process that was created by the legislature in a bill  
18 that was signed by the governor that gives the Energy  
19 Commission jurisdiction over projects like wind and solar  
20 PV that we didn't have jurisdiction over before that.

21           Every project that comes for before us we  
22 evaluate on its own merits. And I am so proud of our  
23 staff. We have professionals in engineering and biology  
24 and cultural issues, a broad sweep of expertise. In  
25 addition, we hire consultants and we work closely with them

1 on areas where we need some boosting of our strength  
2 because there are some very specific areas in the  
3 California Environmental Quality Act that we're obliged to  
4 evaluate, so we work with them as well. And with every  
5 project our staff is diligent, they're rigorous and they're  
6 unbiased, and that's all you can ask for in a public  
7 servant.

8           Our job as staff is to evaluate all of the  
9 significant impacts of each project from air quality to  
10 noise to visual to biology and then balance those against  
11 the benefits of the project. When we identify impacts, and  
12 we always do, every project, we endeavor to mitigate or  
13 reduce those impacts to what we call a less than  
14 significant level. And we do that with many, many impacts  
15 and those never get discussed in meetings like this. And  
16 we collaborate with the community and with the developers  
17 to do that. In the end though, in some cases there are  
18 still some significant impacts that we can't mitigate, we  
19 call them significant unmitigable impacts, and then our job  
20 is to balance.

21           So for Willow Rock, we identified one significant  
22 unmitigable impact and that was for visual. You've got a  
23 project located in a rural area and it's a large  
24 infrastructure project, steel in the ground, and it's  
25 disruptive to the aspects of that part of California. But

1 staff found that the visual impact, while significant, was  
2 one that could be overridden by this Commission. And  
3 indeed, as you'll hear from Hearing Officer Webster-  
4 Hawkins, that's exactly what the Committee has proposed to  
5 do. And I want to let you know that we agree with the  
6 Committee's view that this is a significant impact but that  
7 the benefits of the project outweigh the impact, and  
8 therefore this project should be approved.

9 With that, I'll hand it over to Hearing Officer  
10 Webster-Hawkins to present the Committee's findings and  
11 recommendations. I'll be back to talk about the Fountain  
12 Wind Project.

13 Thank you.

14 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you,  
15 Director Bohan and Chair Hochschild.

16 The time is 11:06 on December 19th, 2025. This  
17 is the California Energy Commission's public hearing for  
18 the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center Docket No. 21-AFC-02  
19 and we are on the record.

20 I'm Renee Webster-Hawkins, the Hearing Officer  
21 for the Committee that the Energy Commission assigned to  
22 oversee this proceeding, and I hereby open up the public  
23 hearing on the Presiding Member's Proposed Decision, or  
24 PMPD, for this Application for Certification or AFC  
25 pursuant to CEC Regulations section 1747(a).

1           The hearing was noticed in the docket for this  
2 proceeding on November 12th, 2025, and the primary purpose  
3 of today's hearing is for the Commission to consider the  
4 PMPD, the final oral and written statements of the parties,  
5 the final comments and recommendations from interested  
6 agencies and members of the public, the errata posted in  
7 the docket on December 16th, 2025, all as reflected in the  
8 Proposed Final Decision posted that same day, and any  
9 further corrections that may be identified today. If the  
10 Commission finds it appropriate, it may take action on the  
11 Proposed Decision before the adjournment of the hearing.

12           Today's public hearing is being conducted both  
13 in-person and remotely via Zoom with the assigned  
14 Committee, the full Commission, representatives of the  
15 Applicant and CEC staff appearing in-person here at the  
16 California Natural Resources Building. The representative  
17 of Intervenor Center for Biological Diversity is appearing  
18 remotely. We may have agency representatives and  
19 interested members of the public appearing in-person or  
20 remotely.

21           The hearing is being transcribed by a certified  
22 court reporter and the court transcription will be  
23 available in both the business meeting and AFC docket  
24 following the event.

25           The event is also being recorded via Zoom and the

1       unofficial Zoom recording will be available on the CEC  
2       website following this hearing.

3               Next slide, please.

4               The notice for this event provided a schedule for  
5       this public hearing. We will begin with a brief  
6       presentation in which I will provide a summary of the  
7       Willow Rock Application for Certification and key events  
8       during this AFC proceeding. I will also outline a few of  
9       the rules applicable to an AFC proceeding. Next, we will  
10      ask the CEC staff, Intervenor Center for Biological  
11      Diversity and the Applicant to provide final closing  
12      statements. After that, we will take comment from any  
13      representatives from tribal organizations and local and  
14      state agencies and members of the public.

15              Then we will turn to Committee and Commissioner  
16      remarks, followed by deliberation. If necessary, the  
17      Commission may adjourn to closed session. Following that,  
18      upon a motion, the Commission may make a decision on this  
19      AFC, and then the hearing will be adjourned.

20              What I'd like to do right now is to ask our  
21      Public Advisor, Mr. Ryan Young, to describe how everyone  
22      here in the room and on Zoom can sign up for public comment  
23      period later in this hearing.

24              Mr. Young?

25              MR. YOUNG: Good morning and thank you for

1 joining us today. Thank you, Hearing Officer.

2 I wanted to mention at the beginning of this  
3 public hearing a few instructions for later, which I will  
4 repeat at that time as well.

5 The public comment period is going to be an  
6 opportunity for attendees to give comments regarding these  
7 proceedings. We ask that everyone in-person visit the  
8 Public Advisor's table in the back of the room and use the  
9 QR code to sign up. If you represent a governmental  
10 entity, local, state, federal, legislature, or California  
11 Native American tribe, please indicate that and we will  
12 prioritize your comments. If you'd like to make comments  
13 on behalf of the California Native American tribe or  
14 government entity, your comment will be taken first and  
15 without a timer. Otherwise, comments are limited to three  
16 minutes and one speaker per organization.

17 For those online, you're going to use the raise-  
18 hand feature that looks like an open palm and for those  
19 joining by phone, you're going to press star nine to raise  
20 your hand and star six to mute and unmute.

21 I'll provide a reminder about these instructions  
22 during the public comment period, but for now, back to you,  
23 Hearing Officer.

24 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr.  
25 Public Advisor.

1                   Next slide, please. Thank you.

2                   So my remarks today are to summarize key  
3 procedural and substantive aspects of this proceeding. I  
4 would refer all interested persons to the docket of the  
5 proceeding for all details.

6                   The Application for Certification began on  
7 December 1st, 2021, when the Applicant Gem A-CAES LLC, or  
8 Hydrostor, filed its initial application for the 520  
9 megawatt advanced compressed air energy storage facility.  
10 The proceeding was suspended after the Applicant determined  
11 that the original site for the project lacked suitable  
12 geological characteristics for the facility design.

13                  The Applicant began filing documents for a  
14 supplemental AFC on March 1st, 2024, which reconfigured and  
15 relocated the proposed project. The supplemental AFC was  
16 deemed complete on July 16th, 2024, which initiated the  
17 discovery phase of the proceeding.

18                  The enhanced photo on this screen depicts the  
19 proposed project to be located on an 88.6-acre portion of  
20 an approximately 112-acre parcel north of Dawn Road between  
21 State Route 14 and Sierra Highway within unincorporated  
22 Kern County, approximately four miles north of Rosamond,  
23 California.

24                  Willow Rock would be a nominal 520 megawatt  
25 gross, or 500 megawatt net, and 4,160 megawatt hour gross,

1 or 4,000 megawatt hour net, compressed air energy storage  
2 facility using Hydrostor's A-CAES technology. Key features  
3 of the system include a 577 acre-foot hydrostatically  
4 compensated surface reservoir with liner and technology and  
5 related accessories, eight electric motor driven air  
6 compressors configured in four trains, four air powered  
7 turbine generators with 100-foot tall air vent stacks,  
8 thermal storage systems including six 100-foot tall hot  
9 water spherical storage tanks, and the 21.5-acre  
10 interlocking shaped floating cover over the reservoir.  
11 Also a 900,000 cubic yard underground compressed air  
12 storage cavern, and all associated operational and safety  
13 equipment and piping. Excavated rock from the cavern may  
14 be stored on site in an architectural berm or may be  
15 trucked off site to a rock processing facility.

16 Energy stored at Willow Rock would be delivered  
17 to the Southern California Edison Whirlwind Substation  
18 located southwest of the site at the intersection of 170th  
19 Street West and Rosamond Boulevard via a new approximately  
20 19-mile 230 kilovolt gen-tie line. The application  
21 describes a preferred route for the gen-tie line with up to  
22 eight options depending on feasibility of certain segments.  
23 All options have been analyzed in the record.

24 The Willow Rock Energy Storage Center is planned  
25 to operate on a 24-hour basis, 365 days a year, with an

1 approximately 50 year lifespan.

2 Next slide, please.

3 The full Energy Commission, or CEC, holds the  
4 decision-making authority for this proceeding. Over the  
5 last four years the Willow Rock AFC proceedings have been  
6 managed by a Committee of two of our five Commissioners,  
7 including Presiding Member Commissioner Andrew McAllister  
8 and Associate Member Commissioner Noemi Gallardo.

9 Next slide, please.

10 I'd like to briefly describe the statutory and  
11 regulatory authority for this proceeding as Director Drew  
12 Bohan mentioned especially since it is distinct from  
13 statutory authority applicable to Opt-In projects that the  
14 CEC also may permit.

15 This slide highlights the original statutory  
16 framework for the CEC's power plant proceedings as provided  
17 in the Warren-Alquist Act.

18 The CEC is the exclusive permitting authority for  
19 all thermal power plants 50 megawatts or greater. This  
20 authority is often called the in-lieu permitting authority  
21 since this exclusive jurisdiction is in place of and  
22 supersedes all other state regional or local permits  
23 certificates or other entitlements that might apply to the  
24 portions of the project.

25 Additionally, AFCs are adjudicative proceedings

1 under the California Administrative Procedures Act. As  
2 such, the state's rules applicable to administrative  
3 hearings are generally applicable to AFC proceedings,  
4 including discovery, procedures, and evidentiary standards.

5 In evaluating an AFC the Warren-Alquist Act  
6 requires the Commission to make specific findings and  
7 conclusions on the project's design, siting and operations.  
8 These findings and conclusions must be based on substantial  
9 evidence in the record of the proceeding. The findings and  
10 conclusions must cover the CEC's responsibilities as a lead  
11 agency under CEQA to ensure the protection of environmental  
12 quality, the assurance of public health and safety, the  
13 engineering design and reliability of the facility and  
14 transmission lines up to the first point of interconnection  
15 with the grid, the public benefits of the project and the  
16 conformity with local, regional, state and federal laws,  
17 ordinances, standards or regulations, what we call LORS.  
18 Lastly it must include enforceable Conditions of  
19 Certification to ensure conformance with LORS and protect  
20 environmental quality.

21 The CEC's regulations include rules for carrying  
22 out AFC proceedings, including all of these requirements.  
23 It also includes the framework for the CEC staff assessment  
24 of the environmental and engineering aspects of the  
25 project, and the procedures for conducting the discovery

1 and evidentiary proceedings, including the numerous  
2 requirements and opportunities for tribal, agency, and  
3 public engagement and coordination in the CEC's  
4 consideration of the proposed project.

5           The CEC's regulatory process for AFCs has been  
6 determined to be a certified regulatory program under CEQA  
7 and, as such, these projects are exempt from many  
8 procedural requirements required under CEQA. That said,  
9 the analyses carried out by the CEC staff and the  
10 Commission each cover all topics required by CEQA according  
11 to the same substantial evidence standard. The Conditions  
12 of Certification in a final decision are equivalent to  
13 mitigation measures under CEQA and they include a  
14 compliance monitoring program to ensure reporting and  
15 enforcement of all required conditions.

16           Next slide, please.

17           As an adjudicative proceeding under the  
18 Administrative Procedures Act, I do want to highlight key  
19 rules or features that make AFCs distinct from other  
20 permitting or regulatory programs at the CEC including Opt-  
21 In projects.

22           First, as with other judicial proceedings, the  
23 key participants are legally regarded as parties. As such,  
24 the CEC staff and Applicant are each parties to the case  
25 with specific rights and obligations associated with their

1 participation.

2                   Additionally interested persons or entities may  
3 petition to be intervenors in the proceeding. In the  
4 Willow Rock AFC the Committee granted petitions to  
5 intervene from the California Unions for Reliable Energy,  
6 or CURE, and the Center for Biological Diversity.

7                   Additionally, as with other judicial proceedings,  
8 the APA requires decisions to be made based on evidence in  
9 the record. Evidence introduced by one party must be  
10 available for cross-examination and rebuttal by the other  
11 parties. This requirement goes hand in hand with the ex  
12 parte rule which prohibits any interested person from  
13 having off-the-record communications with any of the  
14 decision makers while the proceeding is pending. Within  
15 the CEC, the Hearing Officer and each of Commissioners,  
16 including the Committee members and all of their advisors,  
17 are on the decision making side of the ex parte wall and do  
18 not communicate with the siting transmission and  
19 environmental protection staff or their attorneys about the  
20 AFC for the entire time the AFC is under consideration.

21                   Since the CEC decision makers must refrain from  
22 communication with parties and interested persons in AFCs  
23 to comport with this ex parte rule, the CEC staff conducts  
24 robust noticing and engagement with the public,  
25 consultation with tribal representatives, and coordination

1 with state local and region regional agencies.

2 Next slide, please.

3 For those of you that have been following this  
4 proceeding, this slide should feel familiar. It is a  
5 graphic representation of the key elements of the AFC  
6 process.

7 I would like to highlight that the process  
8 includes two formal public comment periods, the first on  
9 the CEC staff's environmental and engineering assessment,  
10 and the second on the presiding member's Proposed Decision.  
11 Additionally, there has been opportunity for public comment  
12 at every site visit, hearing, workshop and status  
13 conference. And the good news to the parties is that the  
14 red arrow depicting the current status is now at the 11  
15 o'clock position and is intended to support a Commission  
16 vote on the Proposed Decision.

17 Next slide.

18 This slide lists all of the topics addressed in  
19 the PMPD as required by the Warren-Alquist Act and the  
20 certified regulatory program. It includes all of the  
21 environmental topics required under CEQA, plus the  
22 additional technical areas related to power plant design,  
23 safety, reliability, efficiency, and the public benefits  
24 required under the Warren-Alquist Act.

25 Next slide, please.

1           Of note, the PMPD addresses key topics and expert  
2 testimony covered at the evidentiary hearing on August  
3 21st, 2025.

4           Regarding biological resources in dispute, the  
5 PMPD recommends that impacts to key wildlife species and  
6 vegetation communities be mitigated at a three-to-one ratio  
7 and that all temporary impacts be treated as permanent due  
8 to the risk and length of time associated with revegetation  
9 efforts in the arid desert environment. The Applicant will  
10 be able to satisfy the requirement through a combination of  
11 mitigation land or credits, and the total obligation will  
12 be adjusted based on actual impacts or avoidance.  
13 Additionally the PMPD addresses the Center for Biological  
14 Diversity's evidence regarding appropriate surveys and  
15 mitigation for Western Joshua trees and woodlands.

16           The Committee benefited from expert comments from  
17 the Department of Water Resources' Division of Safety of  
18 Dams, who will be reviewing and approving the design,  
19 construction, and safe operation of the reservoir  
20 embankment for the life of the project. The Conditions of  
21 Certification and Compliance Monitoring Plan proposes an  
22 MOU between the CEC and DWR to describe the relationship  
23 between the CEC's compliance project manager and the  
24 Division of Safety of Dams to ensure that the Applicant  
25 meets the requirements of the California Water Code and the

1 state's Dam Safety Program.

2                   Additionally, the Committee and Kern County were  
3 equally focused on ensuring that worker and public safety  
4 is prioritized for this project. Among other things the  
5 PMPD includes Kern County's request for adequate resources  
6 to support emergency response and rescue, especially in the  
7 event of accidents related to the construction and  
8 operation of the purpose built cavern. Conditions of  
9 Certification also address worker protection given the  
10 prevalence of Valley fever in the project area.

11                  The Committee also benefited from expert  
12 testimony on the geological characteristics and integrity  
13 of the new project site given the blasting required for the  
14 construction and the cyclical pressures associated with  
15 daily charging and discharging for 50 years. The staff  
16 assessment and Committee's Proposed Decision identifies an  
17 unavoidable significant impact to visual resources at three  
18 key observation points.

19                  The Applicant is committed to utilizing  
20 specialized exterior coatings to reduce the visual impacts  
21 from project features including the stacks, spheres, tanks,  
22 and poles. However, there is no feasible mitigation to  
23 reduce all of the visual impacts to less than significant,  
24 nor are there any feasible alternatives to the which would  
25 meet the project objectives and avoid these significant

1 impacts. Nonetheless, the PMPD makes findings regarding  
2 the specific energy, economic, technological, and other  
3 benefits of the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center that  
4 outweigh the significant impacts to visual resources. The  
5 Proposed Decision describes the specific reasons and  
6 substantial evidence in the record that support a Statement  
7 of Overriding Considerations.

8 The Committee notes that there was no agency or  
9 public opposition to the project at the evidentiary  
10 hearing. The PMPD itemizes those agency and public  
11 comments which praised the potential energy, environmental,  
12 and economic benefits of the project.

13 On December 16th, 2025, the Hearing Office  
14 published errata to the PMPD based on its own review of the  
15 PMPD and the recommended corrections provided by the  
16 parties in their closing written statements, for the  
17 benefit of the Commission, the parties and the public, that  
18 same day the Hearing Office published a Proposed Final  
19 Decision, which is a clean camera ready integration of the  
20 PMPD and the errata.

21 This morning, the Hearing Office docketed a  
22 helpful communication from CFC staff identifying two  
23 additional scrivener errors which had been listed in the  
24 errata but not integrated into the Proposed Final Decision  
25 on pages A135 and A137, and I recommend that those be

1 incorporated into the final decision. Each of the changes  
2 to the PMPD are either non-substantive, typographical, or  
3 scrivener's errors or similar corrections, and none  
4 constitute revisions which would require circulation of the  
5 PMPD.

6 Next slide, please.

7 So that concludes the Hearing Officer's  
8 presentation.

9 Next the Committee has invited each of the  
10 parties to make a brief closing statement of approximately  
11 five minutes apiece. This will be the time for the parties  
12 to deliver their prepared remarks. Later during the  
13 Commission's deliberations there may be questions directed  
14 to one or more of the parties.

15 So to the parties, after you conclude your  
16 closing statements, please stand nearby to be able to  
17 respond as appropriate. When representatives for each  
18 party approaches the podium please remember to state and  
19 spell your name and provide your organizational title for  
20 the record.

21 We will start with CEC staff.

22 MR. BABULA: Hello. My name is Jared Babula,  
23 representing staff, Senior Attorney, that's J-A-R-E-D  
24 B-A-B-U-L-A. And I just want to touch on two points.

25 First, in regards to the Proposed Final Decision,

1 staff has no further comments and appreciates the  
2 Committee's inclusion of staff's comments on the PMPD and  
3 the scrivener's errors that was pointed out. At this  
4 point, staff feels the Proposed Decision is ready to be  
5 adopted as is.

6           Second, I want to reflect that reaching a  
7 business meeting where a project is considered represents  
8 an important milestone and also reflects a transition  
9 point. If the project is certified, it then enters the  
10 compliance phase with construction and operations. To  
11 facilitate a smooth construction phase, Conditions of  
12 Certification Water 5 and 6, and as the Hearing Officer  
13 noted in her presentation, reference an MOU between the CEC  
14 and the Division of Dam Safety [sic], or DSOD, to detail  
15 each agency's role during construction and operation, and  
16 especially DSOD's role as the delegate chief building  
17 official. And this relates to the operation and  
18 construction of the embankment.

19           So I just want to provide a status of where we  
20 are for the Commission on the MOU. and this will be  
21 important because the MOU will help ensure clarity for the  
22 project owner and avoid unnecessary delays in design review  
23 and construction inspections.

24           So currently, the MOU draft language was  
25 developed by the Legal Office and staff and has been

1 provided to DSOD staff for their review. Once language is  
2 generally acceptable, we intend to share the draft -- or  
3 share the draft with the project owner for a comment in  
4 advance of finalizing. The goal here is to use the tools  
5 available consistent with the CEC decision to ensure a  
6 timely and seamless construction phase.

7                   So with that, I would like to thank my Co-  
8                   Counsels Erika Giorgi and Mariah Ponce as well as the step  
9                   team of Eric Veerkamp, Erik Knight, Kaycee Chang and Dian  
10                   Vorters, and especially all the technical staff and experts  
11                   who have contributed greatly to this proceeding.

12                   I also want to thank the Committee for their hard  
13                   work in shepherding this process, and the Applicant's team  
14                   and their Legal Counsel, Jeff Harris and Samantha Neumyer,  
15                   for their responsiveness to address questions and issues.

16                   And with that staff rests.

17                   HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr.  
18                   Babula.

19                   Next we will hear from the Intervenor Center for  
20                   Biological Diversity. Ms. Zeynep Graves is appearing  
21                   remotely.

22                   Can I ask the Public Advisor to open up her line?

23                   MR. YOUNG: Ms. Graves line is open.

24                   MS. GRAVES: Good afternoon, Chair Hochschild,  
25                   members of the Commission, and Hearing Officer Webster-

1 Hawkins. My name is Zeynep Graves, Z-E-Y-N-E-P  
2 G-R-A-V-E-S, and I'm here on behalf of the Intervenor  
3 Center for Biological Diversity.

4 On behalf of the Center, I want to thank the  
5 Hearing Officer, Presiding Member, and the Committee for  
6 all the time, care and attention they have devoted to the  
7 Willow Rock Energy Storage Center Project. We also extend  
8 our appreciation to CEC staff and the Applicant for their  
9 work throughout this process and for substantive engagement  
10 with the issues raised in the record.

11 The Center intervened in this matter because this  
12 novel energy storage proposal has the potential to support  
13 California's transition to a clean energy grid, although it  
14 will also have significant environmental impacts. This  
15 proceeding reflects the value of a careful evidence-based  
16 review, particularly in a desert landscape where biological  
17 resources are highly vulnerable.

18 As the Center has emphasized throughout this  
19 process, avoidance is always the most effective and  
20 reliable way to protect fragile desert resources and the  
21 species that depend on them including western Joshua trees.  
22 Once disturbed these ecosystems recover slowly, if at all,  
23 and that reality underscores the importance of getting the  
24 analysis and the safeguards right before impacts occur.

25 We appreciate that the Proposed Final Decision

1 and the Conditions of Certification recognize the full  
2 scope of the project's biological impacts and place clear  
3 limits on when and how those impacts may be authorized.  
4 The record reflects careful consideration of biological  
5 evidence, regulatory requirements, and the long-term  
6 consequences of development in the desert ecosystem.

7 The requirement that avoidance, minimization, and  
8 mitigation obligations be fully demonstrated before impacts  
9 to many sensitive environmental resources may proceed is  
10 really critical to ensuring compliance with the California  
11 Environmental Quality Act, the California Endangered  
12 Species Act, and the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act.  
13 If the project is approved the Center intends to continue  
14 to engage with the project to ensure the Conditions of  
15 Certification are met.

16 This process also shows the tremendous value of  
17 the public participation in the decision-making process  
18 which ensures that the Commission is fully apprised of  
19 both the potential benefits and impacts of proposals  
20 brought before it. The Commission must weigh many factors  
21 in its review, including both the importance of clean  
22 energy development and the need to safeguard California's  
23 fragile desert resources. Again, in the Center appreciates  
24 the collaborative work that has occurred over the course of  
25 this proceeding.

1                   And with that, we'll rest. Thank you.

2                   HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you Ms.  
3 Graves.

4                   For the Commission's awareness, the Intervenor  
5 CURE reached an agreement with the Applicant prior to the  
6 evidentiary hearing and has respectfully declined its  
7 opportunity for a closing statement today.

8                   So last, we will hear from the Applicant who has  
9 asked for expanded time for its closing statement while  
10 respecting the Committee's desire for brevity.

11                  MR. HARRIS: I'm Jeff Harris on behalf of the  
12 Applicant, J-E-F-F H-A-R-R-I-S.

13                  Are you having trouble hearing me a little bit?  
14 How's that? Maybe better? I'm glad I'm not as tall as  
15 Jared. There's the microphone.

16                  Thank you for the opportunity to be here. I'm  
17 glad I carefully worded my email to you since it got read  
18 back to me.

19                  We would like the opportunity to have Mr.  
20 Hildebrand say a few words, but I also want to accomplish  
21 your primary objective to deal with any deliberative  
22 process here. So we have a few minutes for Mr. Hildebrand.  
23 Would you like that now or would you like that right before  
24 public hearing?

25                  HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Mr.

1 Hildebrand's comments would be welcome during public  
2 comment. We'll prioritize them to come first.

3 MR. HARRIS: Okay. Great. I think that's a good  
4 compromise. Perfect.

5 I appreciate the opportunity to be here today.  
6 We are at the 11th hour on your little dial, thank God.  
7 It's been a while to get here. We appreciate the  
8 opportunity. I'll deal with the formal stuff first. We  
9 don't have any further comments. We appreciate very much  
10 working with Mr. Babula and all the folks from the Chief  
11 Counsel's Office to deal with the last details here. We  
12 agree with the filing that was made today, so we're in full  
13 support of your of your Proposed Decision and the errata.  
14 We believe they're accurate.

15 I guess the one thing I would add substantively  
16 is that we believe that you've done an excellent job with  
17 this Proposed Decision. And most importantly, from our  
18 perspective, all of your conclusions here are supported by  
19 substantial evidence in the record. And I just really want  
20 to thank the parties and the staff in particular, and the  
21 other parties, the intervenors, for really making this a  
22 robust record, substantial evidence. Every issue was put  
23 out there. There was nobody hiding a ball. Every ball was  
24 placed out there, picked up, put down, buried, re-unburied,  
25 and looked at again. So the record here is fantastic for

1 this decision, so we support that.

2                   In terms of some of your overall conclusions,  
3 Commissioner McAllister, I want to assure you that I was  
4 listening to your entire presentation today and I picked up  
5 on the phrase of diversity of views. There may be some  
6 diversity of views in terms of visual impacts and  
7 biological resource issues, but the important thing is that  
8 that record supports your conclusions and is consistent  
9 with the requirements of the law. So again, thank you for  
10 giving us a full forum to make those cases to you and have  
11 the opportunity to make this.

12                  I don't have anything further substantively other  
13 than to thank the folks that have been involved here. Had  
14 some good, really good support from our partners down in  
15 Kern County and some important federal partners as well,  
16 who are not here today, but want to acknowledge those  
17 accomplishments as well.

18                  So I will close with that bit of remarks, unless  
19 you have any questions for me, and then I'll let Mr.  
20 Hildebrand sort of talk on behalf of the company later. So  
21 thank you for this opportunity.

22                  HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr.  
23 Harris.

24                  Next slide, please.

25                  So that brings us to our agency and public

1 comment period.

2 Mr. Public Advisor, back to you.

3 MR. YOUNG: Thank you, Hearing Officer.

4 The CEC now welcomes public comment on this item.

5 All comments will become part of the public record. Again,  
6 this public comment period is an opportunity for attendees  
7 to give comments regarding this proceeding. If you'd like  
8 to make comments on behalf of a California Native American  
9 tribe or governmental entity, your comment will be taken  
10 first and without a timer. Otherwise, comments are limited  
11 to three minutes and one speaker per organization. We'll  
12 show a timer on the screen and alert you when your time is  
13 up. And again, all comments become part of the public  
14 record.

15 We're going to start with commenters joining us  
16 in-person and then transition to our online and phone  
17 attendees. Again, if you're joining us in-person and wish  
18 to make comments, please visit the Public Advisors table at  
19 the back of the room. And I'm not seeing any Native  
20 American tribes or governmental entities, so we're going to  
21 transition to Mr. Hildebrand.

22 Mr. Hildebrand, be welcomed.

23 MR. HILDEBRAND: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,  
24 Commissioners. My name is Curt Hildebrand, C-U-R-T,  
25 Hildebrand, H-I-L-D-E-B-R-A-N-D, Senior Vice President with

1 Hydrastor. And on behalf of our community and industry  
2 partners and everybody at Hydrastor, it is our distinct  
3 pleasure to be here today.

4                   The Willow Rock Energy Storage Center represents  
5 a number of important firsts, not only for Hydrastor, but  
6 for the state of California and for our nation. For  
7 Hydrastor, Willow Rock represents our company's flagship  
8 advanced compressed air energy storage project globally.  
9 At 500 megawatts and eight hours of energy storage  
10 capacity, this is one of the largest energy storage  
11 projects being advanced globally, and it will be our first  
12 utility-scale greenfield project as well.

13                   When we deploy our patented emissions-free  
14 technology, we will be generating up to 4,000 megawatt  
15 hours per day of energy storage. And this will play a  
16 crucial role as California's grid and load expands with the  
17 advancement of artificial intelligence and data centers.

18                   As our flagship project, we've sought to  
19 establish strong relationships and build support within our  
20 host communities in Kern County. Over the course of the  
21 project's development, we have attended over 400 local  
22 meetings and made over 50 presentations to local community  
23 groups. Our team has been active in keeping all  
24 stakeholders informed on the project during its  
25 development, and we are proud to have earned the unanimous

1 support of the Kern County Board of Supervisors alongside  
2 numerous other local community and non-profit organizations  
3 throughout Kern County.

4 I'd also like to thank the highly professional  
5 team at Kern County for their assistance through and  
6 guidance throughout this development process. Planning  
7 Directors Lorelei Oviatt and Craig Murphy made enormous  
8 contributions in helping Hydrostor position this project  
9 for success. We very much appreciate the assistance  
10 provided by Kern County, the Kern Board of Supervisors, our  
11 project's District 2 Supervisor Chris Parlier, and the  
12 entire staff at Kern County.

13 For the State of California, Willow Rock also  
14 represents many important firsts. The project would be the  
15 first long-duration A-CAES project reviewed and approved by  
16 the California Energy Commission. The extensive AFC review  
17 process conducted by the CEC would serve as a future  
18 roadmap for what we expect will be additional A-CAES  
19 projects in California and beyond. Additionally, the  
20 project would once again showcase California's global  
21 leadership role in promoting and implementing new  
22 technologies to help support a clean, more reliable, more  
23 affordable energy supply for California consumers.

24 Willow Rock would also serve to diversify the  
25 technologies that California's growing energy storage

1 portfolio requires to meet our RPS goals. Not only A-CAES  
2 technology -- only A-CAES technology provides critical  
3 electrical attributes that are typically not found in  
4 traditional lithium-ion storage solutions. We create  
5 spinning reserve, flexible votive support, frequency  
6 response, and additional electrical attributes that play a  
7 critical role in operating a reliable grid.

8           Other local and statewide benefits for the  
9 project include construction and operations will be  
10 constructed -- will be conducted by a highly skilled union  
11 labor force with over 2 million worker hours of  
12 construction required to complete the project.

13           The project will support important additions to  
14 Kern County's emergency response capabilities, including a  
15 new state-of-the-art urban rescue vehicle.

16           Willow Rock will employ an average workforce of  
17 approximately 250 union construction workers over its five-  
18 year construction cycle.

19           The project will generate over half a billion  
20 dollars in direct and indirect economic benefits in Kern  
21 County during its operational lifespan.

22           Willow Rock will not be exempt from paying  
23 property taxes, like solar PV, and accordingly will provide  
24 significant financial benefits to Kern County.

25           From a national perspective, again, Willow Rock

1 represents a number of important firsts for our industry.  
2 The project remains on track to receive a \$1.76 billion  
3 loan guarantee from the U.S. Department of Energy loan  
4 program office. The DOE loan guarantee remains one of the  
5 largest such federal commitments to California under the  
6 Inflation Reduction Act.

7 The project is also set to benefit from  
8 significant federal tax credits that were specifically  
9 established to promote new technologies and projects like  
10 Willow Rock and A-CAES. Importantly, these financial  
11 incentives will accrue directly to the benefit of  
12 California rate payers.

13 I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that  
14 the deployment of any new technology at scale, many lessons  
15 will be learned in that process. Willow Rock was no  
16 exception to this rule and everyone involved in this AFC  
17 process, myself included, learned a lot throughout these  
18 proceedings.

19 As our Committee members are aware, we faced  
20 numerous challenges during the development of this project.  
21 However, CEC staff remain committed to working closely with  
22 us to understand and evaluate our project impacts.

23 We want to thank our Committee members,  
24 Commissioner McAllister, Commissioner Gallardo, our project  
25 managers, Kaycee Chang, Eric Veerkamp, our Hearing Officer,

1 Renee Webster-Hawkins, and all CEC staff for their  
2 contributions in the review of this project. On behalf of  
3 everyone at Hydrostor, we greatly appreciate the hard work  
4 and dedication CEC and staff committed to this project.

5 I'd also like to recognize the team that made  
6 this project happen, our Willow Rock Development Team. The  
7 dedication and passion this group demonstrated on a daily  
8 basis was truly an inspiration to watch. My personal  
9 thanks go out to our fearless permitting lead, Laurel Lees,  
10 who quarterbacked our team to the goal line here today. I  
11 also want to acknowledge the and thank our world-class  
12 development team for their contributions.

13 In closing, I'd like to reiterate that Hydrostor  
14 and our team is fully committed to making our flagship  
15 project, the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center, a long-term  
16 success for all stakeholders in this proceeding. We look  
17 forward to continuing to work closely with the CEC, Kern  
18 County, and all our stakeholders to achieve this goal.

19 Thank you and happy to answer any questions you  
20 may have.

21 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr.  
22 Hildebrand.

23 MR. YOUNG: Thank you for your comments.

24 I would now like to welcome Richard Chapman to  
25 the podium, followed by Anthony Myers.

1                   Richard, please approach the podium. State and  
2 spell your name for the record, and we welcome your public  
3 comment.

4                   MR. CHAPMAN: Good morning. I think it's still  
5 morning. My name is Richard Chapman, R-I-C-H-A-R-D  
6 C-H-A-P-M-A-N, and I'm the President of the Kern Economic  
7 Development Corporation. And I'm here today to speak in  
8 support of the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center Project.

9                   Our mission, Kern EDC's mission, is to cultivate  
10 and promote Kern County's boundless opportunities for  
11 business. We have approximately 200 members, public  
12 sector, private sector, business education, and government  
13 working in concert to advance employment opportunities and  
14 growth for our region.

15                   We're proud to represent the energy capital of  
16 the West and also the renewable capital of the U.S.  
17 Currently, we have 22,000 megawatts that are permitted in  
18 solar and wind and 15,000 megawatt hours of storage  
19 projects. We're very proud to represent the energy  
20 evolution that is occurring in the U.S., and this project  
21 will add to the portfolio, that diverse portfolio, that  
22 dynamic portfolio that really creates upward mobility  
23 opportunities for our residents and citizens.

24                   Our unemployment level is about 3 percent higher  
25 than the state, about 8.6 percent. The economy is facing

1 many changes in terms of the oil and gas industry. We're  
2 looking at transferability of skill sets. We are the  
3 number four STEM region in the country, and so the  
4 Hydrostor Project, it really is perfect.

5 Our litmus test is at EDC, is basically three  
6 legs of the stool, and you've heard about this today. For  
7 us, is there capital investment? I think it's about \$1.5  
8 billion wage income, of course, family wage income, right,  
9 in terms of benefits, which this project does. And then  
10 also public revenue. As Mr. Hildebrand mentioned, there is  
11 significant property taxes that will pay for roads,  
12 education, et cetera, in our community.

13 We are very supportive of this project because it  
14 really continues to move the needle for, as was mentioned  
15 earlier today, RPS. This is happening in Kern County. And  
16 again, we have significant legs of the stool that are  
17 providing opportunities for our residents, the state, and  
18 the community.

19 I also will add multiplier. There's significant  
20 talk about jobs on site, construction jobs, as well as  
21 full-time, but the multiplier effect is critical. The  
22 induced and indirect impact, be it restaurants where wages  
23 are spent, suppliers, that is even two to three times  
24 higher than what we can measure on the site.

25 So in conclusion, thank you for your time and

1 consideration of this critical economic development  
2 project, not just for the Kern County, but also the state  
3 and the U.S.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. YOUNG: Thank you for your comments.

6 I'd now like to welcome Anthony Myers. Mr.  
7 Myers, please approach the podium. State and spell your  
8 name for the record and be welcome.

9 And then we'll next hear from David Howlett.

10 MR. MYERS: Good morning. My name is Anthony  
11 Myers, A-N-T-H-O-N-Y, last name M-Y-E-R-S, and I am a Co-  
12 Founder of Safe Haven Kids League and Community Resources  
13 of California. We're also Safe Haven Kids League of  
14 California City. And we're a non-profit organization that  
15 helps families in need. One of our key things is to truly  
16 be a full-force resource to help families in all needs that  
17 they may need to help them in their everyday struggles in  
18 life.

19 And I'm basically here because of this amazing  
20 company. We've been in partnership for -- they've been a  
21 sponsor of us for the last two years. And I just really  
22 want to say that this -- I have been to a lot of these and  
23 this is amazing, you know, to be at this last one and to  
24 see a lot of you that I've seen before. And I truly thank  
25 you for your service in what you do. Thank you.

1           Can we give them a hand? Thank you.

2           We're a non-profit and we connected a couple of  
3 years ago. We're a small non-profit. And I remember it  
4 was Thanksgiving time and the year before that we were only  
5 able to give 50 hams and turkeys to families. And I have  
6 to start there because that's where our relationship  
7 starts. And I'm on a time so I'm going to speed here. And  
8 I need to say that since we partnered with this amazing  
9 company, with this family, they're family, with this  
10 amazing -- and they put us into their family, took us into  
11 their family. It tripled and doubled every year. I want  
12 to talk about what just happened last November because I  
13 have to move on.

14           Last November, right, of '25, we did our annual  
15 ham and turkey giveaway. There was so many people. We, in  
16 the past -- we've done it as a drive up this time. And  
17 with the blessing of Hydrostor in every event, and we do 12  
18 events a year, plus have a full community resource, plus  
19 have a total resource outreach team in our community of  
20 East Kern County, we were able to serve 402 families with  
21 Thanksgiving dinner with a full food box with the ham or  
22 turkey. The line was miles long with cars. And Hydrostor  
23 was right there at the front making sure that every family  
24 got a Thanksgiving meal. And of course in these times that  
25 we're in right now, it was important for us to be there.

1 And we had a total of 425 individuals.

2           And of course we had to -- you know, we didn't  
3 have it for them. No. Did they stop there? No. They  
4 didn't stop there. They said, you know what, we're going  
5 to get their names. They went out the next day,  
6 Thanksgiving Eve, and made sure that we had hams and  
7 turkeys to finish feeding those families.

8           This is the company that we have. We're in East  
9 Kern. We're deep down in East Kern County. Some of our  
10 residents feel like they were forgot about. And, but you  
11 know what, we're a full resource that's offering just so  
12 much. We started off very small. I mean, with Hydrostor,  
13 and we have grown to the fact is, is that we're going to be  
14 carbon copying everything that we're doing in our  
15 neighboring city in Boron coming up in '25 to offer  
16 resources to them, to help families there. They're  
17 growing, we're growing.

18           If I'm not mistaken, I go down the 14 Freeway  
19 every single -- well, once a week with my wife and we pass  
20 by and my wife looks over to me like, well, where's the  
21 building? They haven't even broke ground yet. And we're  
22 already at the magnitude that we are with this organization  
23 serving and helping so many families.

24           MR. YOUNG: Thank you so much for your comments,  
25 sir.

1                   COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Oh, I think that's  
2 the -- just wrap up quickly. That would be fine.

3                   MR. MYERS: Okay.

4                   COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Yeah.

5                   MR. MYERS: And I just want to say that I truly,  
6 truly thank, I truly, truly thank this amazing company.  
7 And I thank you all for your service. And our Christmas  
8 event is tomorrow if you want to come out to East Kern.

9                   CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Well, sir, just before we  
10 break, you know, you thanked us with a round of applause.  
11 You're feeding hungry families. Let's give you a round of  
12 applause. Thank you for what you do.

13                   (APPLAUSE)

14                   MR. MYERS: Thank you.

15                   CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Thank you, my friend.

16                   MR. YOUNG: Thank you.

17                   I'd next like to welcome David Howlett. Please  
18 state and spell your name for the record. And we welcome  
19 your public comment.

20                   MR. HOWLETT: Hi. My name is David Howlett,  
21 D-A-V-I-D H-O-W-L-E-T-T, and I am a Kern County resident.

22 I'd like to thank you for stacking me behind Anthony.

23                   And, you know, I'm here in support of the Willow  
24 Rock Hydrostor Project. And, you know, I've been in  
25 construction my whole career. I've lived in Kern County my

1 whole life. This project's important. I mean, a billion  
2 and a half bucks, that's kind of a big deal.

3                   Talk about the construction job creation  
4 happening there, hundreds of jobs for years, that's a big  
5 deal. Two million man hours. I hadn't heard that number  
6 before, but that's pretty impressive, and coming from a  
7 construction. I mean, I was in the oil and gas industry.  
8 It's kind of getting a little bit depressed in Kern County.  
9 And a lot of these jobs are going to transition nicely for  
10 that workforce to move right into Mojave.

11                  I spend a lot -- I live not far from Mojave. I  
12 spend a fair amount of time there. And over the years,  
13 it's really suffered. I don't know if you're familiar with  
14 the area, they've rerouted the highway around. So 58  
15 doesn't go through. In the past, it used to go right  
16 through the City of Mojave. And it now goes around the  
17 City of Mojave. And they've cut all that traffic out of  
18 there.

19                  And with this project going right down through  
20 there now, it will end up out on 14, I'm sure we'll see a  
21 good economic boom for the City of Mojave. And just  
22 Richard talked a little bit about it, but the fact that,  
23 you know, the McDonald's is going to be busy and all of the  
24 agents, all the businesses in that town are going to have  
25 a, you know, a big come up from this happening. So we're

1 super excited about that, just the financial impact on East  
2 Kern as a whole.

3 Obviously, when you hear Anthony talk, and he's  
4 so passionate about what's going on there, and what a great  
5 community partner Hydrostar has been to all of us, so I've  
6 been to a lot of their meetings where they're talking about  
7 what they're going to do for us, or do for -- what they're  
8 going to build and we see how it's going to impact the  
9 community and we see what they're already bringing. And  
10 hell, they're not even there breaking ground yet.

11 So we're super excited for them to come. We're  
12 glad that they're part of the community. They're glad that  
13 they're coming in there. And we just look forward to it.  
14 Super excited.

15 So thank you for everything you guys have done.  
16 Look forward to this thing going forward.

17 MR. YOUNG: Thank you very much.

18 I'd next like to welcome Neal Desai. Neal,  
19 please approach the stage and spell your name for the  
20 record. And we welcome your public comment.

21 MR. DESAI: Hi. Oh, still morning. Okay. Neal  
22 Desai, N-E-A-L D-E-S-A-I. Good afternoon, everyone,  
23 almost. My comments will be there. Neal Desai, Senior  
24 Pacific Region Director with the National Parks  
25 Conservation Association. I'm here on behalf of the

1 Association and our 30,000 members in California to express  
2 our strong support for this project.

3                   Our mission is to protect and enhance our  
4 National Park system for present and future generations.  
5 And as part of that work, we have engaged actively on  
6 renewable energy policies, such as the DRECP, and shaping  
7 long-duration energy storage legislation, like SB 149, AB  
8 1373, AB 205, so that we can diversify and deploy long-  
9 duration energy storage projects and protect ratepayers and  
10 the environment in the process.

11                  And Willow Rock fits precisely within  
12 California's procurement needs. It supports deployment of  
13 the necessary energy, long-duration energy storage  
14 resources. Hydrostor's work through your process  
15 demonstrates that it is an environmentally and economically  
16 responsible long-duration energy storage project. And  
17 that's why we respectfully request your approval of this  
18 project today.

19                  I also want to talk about what this process and  
20 this project means because it's critically important to  
21 build public confidence that California can do this the  
22 right way. And that's really important in this climate.  
23 There are far too many people who do not support renewable  
24 energy development because they are really upset with poor  
25 decision-making that harms our public lands and wildlife

1 places that we love, right, Californians love.

2 I mean, look no further than the Soda Mountain  
3 Solar Project that's right next to the Mojave National  
4 Preserve. It's through your AB 205 Opt-In process. It's  
5 opposed by the Park Service. It was blocked by the county  
6 nine years ago. It would subvert \$35 million in taxpayer-  
7 funded wildlife crossing. And they think you're going to  
8 approve it, so they brought it into the Opt-In process;  
9 right? That's the type of thing that sets us back.

10 In contrast, we have Willow Rock in Hydrostor,  
11 okay? That moves us forward. The Applicant made smart  
12 decisions right from the beginning, the type of engagement  
13 that they had with our organization, with a lot in the  
14 community. I think you heard from some of them already.  
15 They work to do what is right for the environment. They're  
16 contributing to the diversification that's so important,  
17 the diversification of our long-duration energy storage  
18 portfolio. We need to do that. And so I'm very  
19 appreciative of Hydrostor.

20 I'm also very appreciative of your staff. I  
21 mean, that clock, getting to that 11th hour, like it's  
22 great to be here. And so I want to, again, respectfully  
23 request your approval.

24 Thank you.

25 MR. YOUNG: Thank you for your comment.

1                   Hearing Officer, I'm now going to transition to  
2 Zoom.

3                   Chris Parlier, I'm going to unmute your line.  
4 Please unmute on your end. State and spell your name for  
5 the public record, and we welcome your public comment.

6                   Chris Parlier, you're going to want to unmute on your end.  
7 Okay. I will return to Chris in just a moment.

8                   I'm going to recognize Joel MacKay. Joel, please  
9 state and spell your name for the record, and we welcome  
10 your comment.

11                  MR. MACKAY: Joel MacKay. Can you hear me?

12                  MR. YOUNG: We can. Thank you.

13                  MR. MACKAY: Yes. J-O-E-L M-A-C-K-A-Y. I  
14 represent the Rosamond Municipal Advisory Council in  
15 Rosamond, and I'm here to support this project.

16                  From day one, once we found out about this  
17 project, Hydrostor has been a community partner. Like  
18 you've heard, they support the community. They've been  
19 transparent, come to our meetings. The economic benefits  
20 to local economy, our county economy, them supporting  
21 public safety is second to none.

22                  I urge you to support this project. It's  
23 supported within the community. I can't say enough good  
24 things about Hydrostor, very well respected in our  
25 community, and I urge you to support this project.

1                   MR. YOUNG: Thank you for your comment.

2                   Erick Gamez, we're going to unmute your line.

3                   Please unmute on your end. State and spell your name for  
4                   the record, and we welcome your public comment.

5                   MR. GAMEZ: Hello, everybody. My name is Erick  
6                   Gamez, E-R-I-C-K G-A-M-E-Z, and I'm here on behalf of the  
7                   Antelope Valley Economic Development and Growth Enterprise  
8                   to express our strong support of Hydrostor's Willow Rock  
9                   Energy Storage Center.

10                  So AV EDGE is dedicated to advancing responsible  
11                  economic development and high-quality job opportunities all  
12                  across our 3,000-square-mile region, which also includes  
13                  East Kern. So from that perspective, Willow Rock is  
14                  exactly the type of project we work to support, as it  
15                  stands out as a meaningful and strategic investment in our  
16                  local economy and represents a significant source of  
17                  employment for our communities.

18                  AV EDGE works closely with employers, workforce  
19                  partners, and local jurisdictions, so we see the need for  
20                  long-term employment opportunities that can provide  
21                  stability for families. Willow Rock's 50-year project life  
22                  offers exactly that kind of certainty and standing power,  
23                  the broader -- I mean, sorry about that -- too, for East  
24                  Kern.

25                  To date, the project has earned wide and growing

1 support from business leaders, economic development groups,  
2 community organizations, and local residents because it  
3 aligns with the Antelope Valley's long-term economic  
4 development goals and reflects the kind of lasting  
5 investment our communities need. For East Kern and the  
6 Antelope Valley, Willow Rock is an economic development  
7 asset that strengthens our ability to attract future  
8 investment.

9                   So on behalf of AV EDGE, we strongly urge the  
10 Commission to approve Hydrostor's Willow Rock Energy  
11 Storage Center today because we believe that this project  
12 is essential to securing a sustainable economic future for  
13 our region.

14                   Thank you very much.

15                   MR. YOUNG: Thank you.

16                   I'm next going to turn to Corey Costelloe.  
17 Corey, we're going to unmute your line. Please unmute on  
18 your end, state and spell your name for the record, and we  
19 welcome your public comment.

20                   MR. COSTELLOE: Yes, good afternoon. Thank you  
21 so much. Corey Costello, C-O-R-E-Y C-O-S-T-E-L-L-O-E. I  
22 am the Assistant City Manager for the City of Tehachapi.  
23 We're an incorporated city in Kern County, about 25 minutes  
24 from the Hydrostor Willow Rock Energy Project. The  
25 Tehachapi City Council has been very supportive of this

1 project and my speaking in support here today. This is a  
2 transformative energy project, the first of its kind, and  
3 we're honored that it's in East Kern.

4 Tehachapi's no stranger to transformative  
5 projects. In the late 1970s, a company called Zond started  
6 putting these funny-looking turbines on our hillsides with  
7 nothing more than a pickup truck and some guide wires. It  
8 was considered new and transformative at the time. And  
9 over 50 years later, the Tehachapi Pass is the most  
10 productive wind energy pass in the world, and cities from  
11 all over California have enjoyed purchasing renewable  
12 energy from these now much more advanced turbines.

13 Tehachapi has wind. The surrounding communities  
14 of Mojave, California City, and Rosamond have solar  
15 installations, and all these renewable generation tools are  
16 in need of additional battery storage. This Willow Rock  
17 project is perfectly located to benefit all of those  
18 generative tools and to economically impact all the  
19 communities listed above.

20 East Kern County communities work collaboratively  
21 regularly on these projects, and we are in support of this  
22 project, both from the infrastructure it will bring and for  
23 the direct and indirect jobs it will create in our region.  
24 Kern County fuels, defends, feeds, and powers the state.  
25 This project is critical to ensuring we continue to power

1 this state with this transformative idea, nothing new to  
2 East Kern. Innovation rising is our motto in the East Kern  
3 Economic Alliance, and this project is just that.

4 So the City of Tehachapi is supportive of this  
5 project, and we urge the Commission for their approval as  
6 well.

7 Thank you very much.

8 CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Just before we proceed, I just  
9 wanted to share for folks in the room, we have four more  
10 public comments on this item, then we'll proceed to a vote.  
11 And then what I'd like to do is just recess for 10 minutes.  
12 Folks can use the bathroom, take a little break, and then  
13 we'll take up Fountain Wind.

14 So let's -- we have four more, right, Ryan? So  
15 let's proceed with that. Thanks.

16 MR. YOUNG: Thank you.

17 I'm going to return to Chris Parlier. Chris, I'm  
18 going to unmute your line. Please be sure to unmute on  
19 your end. State and spell your name for the record, and we  
20 welcome your comment, Chris.

21 Okay, it looks like we still don't have Chris, so  
22 I'm going to move to George Hodgkinson. George, please  
23 unmute on your end. State and spell your name for the  
24 record, and we welcome your comment.

25 MR. HODGKINSON: Do you hear me?

1                   MR. YOUNG: Yes, we can. Thank you.

2                   MR. HODGKINSON: Okay, my name is George  
3 Hodgkinson, G-E-O-R-G-E, last name H-O-D-G-K-I-N-S-O-N.  
4 I'm President of the Mojave Chamber of Commerce, and also  
5 just spent 18 years on the Mojave Unified School District  
6 Board of Trustees. I'm a lifelong member of Mojave, living  
7 here in Mojave since 1954. I, too, support this project  
8 for a number of reasons, of course, financial support and  
9 input on the jobs that will be created for tech and  
10 education.

11                  And one of the things I found kind of  
12 interesting. Back in 1970, when I got out of college, I  
13 worked for three oil companies on and off, Chevron, Citgo,  
14 and Phillips 66, pumping gas. And at the time, this desert  
15 was wide open and it didn't -- you wouldn't think anything  
16 about needing more energy or changing energy at \$0.339 a  
17 gallon of gas. But I learned while I was going to college,  
18 I majored in astrophysics, and the amount of energy that I  
19 saw in the desert with wind energy and solar energy, quite  
20 impressed about that, but there was not a windmill or solar  
21 collector in the area. Since then, the last 50 years, a  
22 lot of things have changed.

23                  I can't tell you how much I support this. I do  
24 have solar on my house and I have for a number of years.  
25 And I wanted to thank the CEC for their work in this matter

1 and also the support and the community activities that have  
2 been involved with Hydrostor and with that group, and I'm  
3 looking forward to the future of this project coming into  
4 play. I'm looking forward to the number of jobs that were  
5 created and the economic input that we will see.

6               One comment Anthony made earlier, we did lose  
7 quite a bit of business, hospitality business, in our small  
8 town of Mojave. We lost about 40 percent when it was  
9 bypassed, and I'm sure this will help with that in the  
10 construction mode and the increased jobs in the area.

11               So with that, again, thank you very much.

12               MR. YOUNG: Thank you all.

13               For our last public comment, we're going to hear  
14 from Tim Johnson. Tim, I'm unmuting your line. Please  
15 unmute on your end. State and spell your name for the  
16 record. We welcome to comment.

17               MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Just confirming you can  
18 hear me?

19               MR. YOUNG: Yes, we can hear you. Thank you.

20               MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Tim Johnson, T-I-M  
21 J-O-H-N-S-O-N. I'm Vice President of ARB, Inc. We are a  
22 California union construction company, actually started in  
23 Bakersfield back in the '40s. We employ around 1,200 union  
24 craft and supervision. Still maintain an office down in  
25 Bakersfield.

1           So I want to thank the CEC Commission and staff.  
2 I want to speak in support of the project. You know,  
3 hearing all the support, I think, you know, having lived in  
4 this industry for 30 years, the confluence of all of the  
5 positive comments, you know, sometimes things just make  
6 sense. And I think that's where this project lies.

7           We've installed around six gigawatts of  
8 California generation since around 2000. We're actually  
9 installing a gigawatt of solar and BESS just north of  
10 Mojave. Currently, we've been able to do that safely and  
11 responsibly. We've mitigated the biological impacts on the  
12 8,000-acre site, so real familiar with the area. We've  
13 done a lot of work in the high desert area, including  
14 Boron, so real familiar with it. And it can all be done  
15 very safely and responsibly.

16           This project is going to provide substantial  
17 union construction jobs, you've heard some of the numbers,  
18 at a time when we're seeing, honestly, we're seeing a lot  
19 of pull to other states for our talent, you know, craft  
20 talent, people that know how to do trades work. There's a  
21 lot of investment going in Arizona and Nevada and other  
22 places. And a lot of folks are looking at that and looking  
23 at that as an option. So this is a nice way to hang on to  
24 them and keep the skill set here. So as a union  
25 constructor, we support this project.

1           You know, just as a California citizen, the  
2 technology is responsible storage solution. It's really  
3 going to do a good job taking advantage of the substantial  
4 solar energy collection and other renewable energy that is  
5 generated and save it for the evening hours or longer. I  
6 think it was Curt that mentioned earlier, I think a lot of  
7 us heard about the problems they had in Spain and Portugal,  
8 because of the, just the reactivity of the grid. This  
9 will also, you know, help mitigate some of that by  
10 providing a little, I don't know what the word is, but you  
11 know, some sort of inertia, basically, in the nature of the  
12 project versus just pure solar, bass and wind.

13           So we hope the CEC will vote in favor of the  
14 project, and we are, and I think it's an exciting thing. I  
15 suspect George and other locals in the area will benefit  
16 substantially. And there will probably be a number of  
17 hotel rooms taken advantage of and mobile homes rented out  
18 and all kinds of things, so that's a good thing for the  
19 community.

20           Thank you for your time.

21           MR. YOUNG: Thank you for your comments today.

22           Hearing Officer, that concludes public comment,  
23 Back to you.

24           HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr.  
25 Public Advisor.

1                   Next slide, please.

2                   So now is the time for Commissioners remarks and  
3 deliberations. And I would like to turn it over to the  
4 Presiding Member of the Committee, Commissioner McAllister,  
5 to open up the discussion.

6                   COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Great. Thank you,  
7 Hearing Officer Webster-Hawkins. First, just thanks to you  
8 for orchestrating what I think we've heard is a long and  
9 complicated process. Was just noting that the last time we  
10 considered approval through an AFC process was around eight  
11 years ago, a little bit more than eight years ago, so it's  
12 been a long time, and that was the Stanton Energy Center.  
13 So I've been really happy to see the muscle memory still  
14 there with staff. And the process is not one for the faint  
15 hearted. So I think we all can agree on that. So I wanted  
16 to thank Renee and the Hearing Office just for a job  
17 incredibly well done.

18                   Also, the Public Advisor, Ryan, you've done a  
19 stellar job, both here in Sacramento and also out in  
20 hearings and other events we've had in support of this  
21 project during the process down in Kern County,  
22 particularly Mojave.

23                   I want to thank, also, my partner on the  
24 Committee, Commissioner Gallardo, just really have been --  
25 I think the whole process has benefited from your

1       experience and wisdom in the siting arena, so thank you.

2               Also wanted to thank my Advisor Maggie Dang,  
3       who's here in the audience someplace, and has been really  
4       critical to help sort of keep all the cylinders tuned up  
5       and firing in my office.

6               Want to thank, also, staff. And I think  
7       Executive Director Bohan made clear that the AFC process  
8       has staff as a party. And Hearing Officer also made that  
9       point. Staff is a party, so this is a much more formal  
10      process than sort of some of our typical processes and  
11      rulemakings, regulatory and the Commission. And so that  
12      formality means that the process is even more important to  
13      make sure that we're hearing everybody listening to  
14      everyone in the right format and the right process so we  
15      don't get crosswise and create conflicts and that sort of  
16      thing, so the record really can be developed in a  
17      responsible and grounded way.

18               And staff, Mr. Babula and the counsel on this  
19       project, the whole team has been fabulous. And the staff,  
20       all the subject matter experts who've worked on different  
21       parts of the PMPD and just been in this project for the  
22       last couple years, their dedication and completeness and  
23       expertise has shown through, I think, in the final product.  
24       And, you know, the more beautiful the final product works,  
25       that kind of means the harder, you know, the harder folks

1 work to make it that way. And I think that's the case  
2 here.

3 I want to thank the Applicant. I think it's  
4 pretty rare that we have a project of this significance and  
5 hear essentially no significant opposition. And I think  
6 that is a real testament, Mr. Hildebrand, Mr. Harris and  
7 the whole team, of really leaning into the community and  
8 figuring out how to be helpful and how to be a good citizen  
9 and how to invest in a place that you know you're going to  
10 be for a while, assuming, you know, if we approve this. So  
11 your vision and your sort of dedication to that end point,  
12 I think, comes through loud and clear, so thanks for that.

13 And the intervenors. We heard from CBE. I want  
14 to really thank the participation from Communities for  
15 Better Environment and CURE. And again, the input that we  
16 intake, that we hear during the process, it impacts the  
17 outcome in a positive way, so -- and the fact that you'll  
18 be also paying attention during implementation, during the  
19 build-out and operation, is also really great to hear.

20 I want to also thank the state entities or the  
21 public entities, most notably the County of Kern. Many of  
22 you know I grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. A slight  
23 aside. But I've always had an appreciation for the  
24 Bakersfield sound. And the sincerity and the sort of  
25 organic conversations that happen, the groundedness of the

1       communities and the county, and the responsiveness to the  
2       citizens and the residents across the board that live in  
3       Kern County, I think is super clear. The County of Kern is  
4       really listening, trying to do the right thing. And I  
5       think it's a real example of how to be responsive and  
6       responsible to folks who live in the jurisdiction. So I  
7       want to just really appreciate Lorelei Oviatt and the whole  
8       team. We've heard some of the names and I won't repeat  
9       them. But I think Kern really, really is trying to be part  
10      of the solution in a way that really is balanced and sort  
11      of all of the above, but also I think very considerate of  
12      the environment and the people in their part of the world.

13           And then finally, I want to thank the Department  
14      of Water Resources and the Division of Safety of Dams for  
15      what they have done, participated in the process up to now,  
16      but also the collaboration that they will have with the  
17      Applicant if and when construction begins on the dam  
18      aspect. So obviously we'll be over -- the Commission would  
19      be overseeing that, but I think the conversation there has  
20      been really helpful and hopefully set the stage for a  
21      smooth path forward.

22           A few notable -- well, I also want to thank the  
23      commenters, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Myers, always just a pleasure.  
24      This feels like sort of a version two of some of the  
25      hearings we've had down in Kern County. Everybody's kind

1 of come up. It's just, you know, the group is sort of a  
2 movable feast a little bit. But just the positivity and  
3 the tight relationships, I think, are important and will be  
4 important in the community.

5                   Mr. Howlett, Mr. Desai, Mr. MacKay, Mr. Gamez,  
6 and Mr. Costelloe, Mr. Hodgkinson, Mr. Johnson, really  
7 appreciate all of your points and your just willingness to  
8 step up and comment on this proceeding.

9                   So I think this project, to me, has kind of  
10 evolved in the way I feel about it. I think some folks  
11 have commented along these lines, but California, we're  
12 doing big things and we're leading in a lot of important  
13 ways. And diversity among our storage fleet is important.

14                   Having some rotating mass on the system is  
15 important, that inertia that I think Mr. Johnson commented  
16 on. We've got a lot of inverterbased resources out there,  
17 including in that area and, you know, particularly solar,  
18 but also some wind. Much of the wind is now, you know,  
19 variable speed with inverterbased resource, inverterbased  
20 conversion. And incorporation of that flexible -- of those  
21 flexible renewable resources, you know, nearby to the  
22 supply and, you know, in the region and having it not just  
23 be lithium ion batteries, but lots of other technologies, I  
24 think, is really important.

25                   Also, I want to point out that the Committee and

1 the staff and everyone involved have really taken the  
2 urgency of moving, getting moving forward seriously. The  
3 keeping open that window for tax credits and the loan  
4 guarantees has been important for this project if it's  
5 going to happen. And so without, you know, prejudging, we  
6 really wanted to not be a barrier to that in case the  
7 project does go forward. And so I feel like today we're  
8 coming through with that commitment.

9                   And I want to just thank, again, my partner on  
10 this, Commissioner Gallardo, for really leaning into it and  
11 trying to keep it moving forward and meeting the deadlines  
12 that we set so that we could get this to the Commission for  
13 a vote before the end of the year.

14                   A couple of just, I think, other notable aspects  
15 of this project. There are a couple of things that are  
16 hanging that will be sort of decided or, you know, the  
17 exact path forward will be determined down the road a  
18 little bit. One is just the ongoing work with the Division  
19 of Safety of Dams, which I mentioned.

20                   The other is the berm or no-berm option. And I  
21 just wanted to mention that. We felt that that depends on  
22 sort of future developments on the ground. And so we're  
23 comfortable deferring whether the berm happens or not and  
24 did not think it was critical for the decision. And so  
25 while it is a lot of material that will be moving around

1 the state or not or staying on site, that decision is sort  
2 of TBD, but not critical for the approval, but, you know,  
3 important to hash out and really define precisely, you  
4 know, once the project is being developed.

5 Let's see. Finally, just on the technical  
6 pieces, I just want to point out, you know, this is really  
7 innovative. You know, Mr. Hildebrand talked about that.  
8 It's an innovative application, but of off-the-shelf  
9 technologies.

10 And I think, you know, the drilling, the  
11 excavation, you know, the compressors, we have a lot of  
12 compressors, and then the expanders coming back out, those  
13 are -- you know, these are known, known pieces of  
14 equipment. The thermal storage, even. But, you know,  
15 having thermal storage, taking heat from compressors and  
16 then using it to keep the whole thing from freezing when  
17 the compressed air comes back up, that's interesting. You  
18 know, it's a thermal, an application of thermal at this  
19 scale is something we haven't seen before. So, you know,  
20 just commend the sort of inherent risk that Hydrostor is  
21 taking on, but also, you know, the prudence with it with  
22 which it's developed the technical plan and the designs.

23 So let's see. I guess with that, I do have a  
24 question. I just want to kind of get on the record,  
25 could -- and probably from Mr. Hildebrand, but if you have

1 a technical person, but could you sort of -- so this is  
2 a -- you know, it's taking energy from the grid and then  
3 it's pushing energy back into the grid and taking advantage  
4 of this temporal arbitrage. And I wanted to just get you  
5 to provide a little more detail on how that's going to work  
6 in terms of, you know, using otherwise curtailable,  
7 perhaps, renewables and then providing peak resources, the  
8 ramping resources.

9                   MR. HILDEBRAND: I want to make sure I understand  
10 your question clearly, Commissioner. Are you asking to  
11 describe an average day in the plant life?

12                   COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Yeah, just sort of how  
13 that, how not necessarily like contracts and who you're  
14 going to -- who your offtaker is or anything, but just sort  
15 of how that daily arbitrage is going to work.

16                   MR. HILDEBRAND: Yeah, typically we'll end up  
17 contracting our capacity to load-serving entity customers  
18 that will have certain dispatch rights for the facility.

19                   But to help illustrate the -- an average day in  
20 the life of the project, what we envision, we're going to  
21 take off-peak power during, typically, night hours. So for  
22 a 24-hour period, starting at midnight, demand is low.  
23 There's wind blowing across the straight -- across the  
24 state. There are -- there's an excess of power on the  
25 grid. We will utilize that off-peak power, run our

1 compressors, compress our air, inject it down into the  
2 cavern over the next 13 hours until one o'clock p.m. So  
3 for those first 13 hours of the day, typically those are  
4 off-peak hours. And this is again, for illustrative  
5 purposes, markets change on a minute by minute basis.

6           Nonetheless, by one o'clock we'll have injected  
7 our full air volume down into the caverns. Over that 13  
8 hours, the water in the caverns will slowly come up to the  
9 surface displaced by that compressed air. And by 1:00  
10 p.m., we'll have a fully charged 4,000 megawatt hour  
11 battery, if you will.

12           When we get the signal to reverse that operation  
13 and generate, go from the charge mode to the generation  
14 mode, we can do that very quickly. We can do it in stages.  
15 We can do it all at once. We can ramp up, ramp down,  
16 provide all these ancillary services. And for the next  
17 eight hours, say from two o'clock to nine o'clock or two  
18 o'clock to ten o'clock p.m., we'll generate 500 megawatts  
19 and send that onto the grid. Those are on peak hours.  
20 Those are very valuable megawatts to have on the grid  
21 during those hours. And we'll be able to provide those  
22 with all the electrical attributes of rotating equipment.

23           Once the air has been exhausted, our batteries  
24 uncharged, that's about midnight, and we'll turn it around  
25 and do it all over again the next day.

1                   COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: I appreciate that  
2 explanation and really kind of just for the benefit of the  
3 record today to everybody here and folks who might not be  
4 as familiar.

5                   But I'll wrap up my comments by just saying, you  
6 know, this, I think this decision is -- the Proposed  
7 Decision, PMPD, is quite an example of completeness and  
8 sort of application of our AFC process. Hundreds, dozens,  
9 if not hundreds, of people involved in that through the  
10 course of a couple years with a break in between for the  
11 Applicant to resolve some technical issues, find it an  
12 appropriate site. But, you know, I would recommend folks  
13 to, you know, put it on their bedside table and pour  
14 through it at some point if you're so inclined.

15                  And just really am happy to be here today  
16 bringing this to a vote at the Commission. So thanks to  
17 all my colleagues for talking through the item today.

18                  Back to you, Hearing Officer, or back to you,  
19 Chair.

20                  HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you. I  
21 also --

22                  CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Yeah.

23                  HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: -- I wanted to  
24 provide the Associate Member, Commissioner Gallardo, an  
25 opportunity to make remarks.

1                   COMMISSIONER GALLARDO:  Totally fine.  Thank you.  
2 I don't have any questions.  I do have some remarks.

3                   I want to start with gratitude for the  
4 participation of the representatives, residents, and local  
5 leaders from Kern County today and throughout the entire  
6 proceeding.  It's very valuable to hear your perspectives  
7 and expertise about the area where you live, work, and  
8 play, and also how you feel about the impact of having this  
9 Applicant Hydrostor as a neighbor.

10                  And next, thanks to Commissioner McAllister for  
11 his leadership and diligence in this proceeding.  It was  
12 also fun to do the site visits, the multiple site visits to  
13 the proposed site and to learn more about your perspective  
14 during those engagements.

15                  And I also want to thank your advisor, Maggie  
16 Deng, and my advisor, Jimmy Qaqundah, who formed a great  
17 team in supporting both of us.

18                  And I'll also echo the praise of Hearing Officer  
19 Webster-Hawkins for keeping us organized, informed, and for  
20 coordinating so many moving parts.  It's not easy to herd  
21 multiple Commissioners and their advisors, but you did it  
22 with such elegance, so thank you for that.  And I also  
23 appreciate all the work of the Policy Office, the Chief  
24 Counsel's Office.

25                  And I want to express my gratitude to all the

1 parties, too, who worked so hard to get us to this point,  
2 including the Applicant. And in large part, that was due  
3 to how everyone interacted at our hearings, in many cases  
4 collaborating closely to resolve issues, even when parties  
5 did not agree on things and didn't result in full  
6 agreement. But that collaboration was key to getting us  
7 moving so fast.

8                   And I also appreciated everyone's grace in  
9 handling the tragic passing during the process of two  
10 people we care about, Daryl Harrison from the Applicant  
11 team shortly before the evidentiary hearings started, and  
12 also former CEC Chair Bob Wiesenmiller.

13                   So with that, I will support approving this item.  
14 Thank you.

15                   HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Thank you,  
16 Commissioner.

17                   To you, Chair.

18                   CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: No further comments from me.  
19 So do you want to call for the vote?

20                   HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Does  
21 Commissioner Skinner have any comments?

22                   CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Did you have further comments,  
23 Commissioner Skinner? Okay.

24                   HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: All right. So  
25 with that, what I'm hearing is a collective concurrence of

1 the Commission. And at this time, I would ask for a motion  
2 to adopt the Presiding Member's Proposed Decision, together  
3 with the errata published in the docket, which include all  
4 findings of fact and conclusions of law required by the  
5 Warren-Alquist Act, including the Statement of Overriding  
6 Consideration for significant impacts to visual resources,  
7 and to certify the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center  
8 21AFC02.

9 Presiding Member McAllister, do we have a motion?

10 COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: So moved.

11 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Associate  
12 Member Gallardo, do we have a second?

13 COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: I second.

14 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: I will call for  
15 a roll call vote.

16 Commissioner McAllister?

17 COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Aye.

18 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Commissioner  
19 Gallardo?

20 COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Aye.

21 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Commissioner  
22 Skinner?

23 COMMISSIONER SKINNER: Aye.

24 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: Chair  
25 Hochschild?

1 CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Aye.

2 HEARING OFFICER WEBSTER-HAWKINS: And Vice Chair  
3 Gunda is not present at the moment.

4 The vote is four to zero. The final decision is  
5 adopted. And this public hearing for the Willow Rock  
6 Energy Storage Center AFC Docket 21-AFC02 is now adjourned  
7 at 12:29.

8 CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: Thank you so much, Hearing  
9 Officer Webster-Hawkins. Really appreciate that.

10 And thank you all for hanging in there. What I'd  
11 like to do, it's 12:30 now, let's take a 10-minute recess.  
12 The restrooms, for those of you who haven't been here  
13 before, just go out to the wall and make a right. And  
14 we'll come back and reconvene at 12:40.

15 (Off the record at 12:49 p.m.)

16 (On the record at 12:42 p.m.)

17 CHAIR HOCHSCHILD: All right, at this time, we'll  
18 move on to Item 7, Opt-In Certification Fountain Wind  
19 Project.

20 And I'd like to invite Drew Bohan to make some  
21 opening remarks before inviting Kaycee Chang to present on  
22 the project.

23 MR. BOHAN: All right, Commissioners, thank you  
24 again. Good to see you this afternoon. I wanted to just  
25 provide a high-level overview of this matter. You just