

DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	24-OPT-03
Project Title:	Soda Mountain Solar
TN #:	268841
Document Title:	Soda Mountain Solar Project Staff Assessment Public Meeting Presentation
Description:	N/A
Filer:	Lisa Worrall
Organization:	California Energy Commission
Submitter Role:	Commission Staff
Submission Date:	2/27/2026 8:51:23 AM
Docketed Date:	2/27/2026



Soda Mountain Solar Project Staff Assessment Public Meeting – 24-OPT-03

California Energy Commission
Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division
February 5, 2026



Pledge of Allegiance



I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.



Housekeeping Items

- Meeting is hybrid and recorded.
- Instruction for Zoom closed captioning service:
 - **To Activate:** click on “live transcript” icon and then choose either “show subtitle” or “view full transcript”.
 - **To Stop:** click "exit" from “live transcript” or select “hide subtitle” icon.
- Please be mindful of the audio for those participating online; speak slowly and clearly.
- Agenda includes time for public comment and input.



Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **CEC Staff Presentations**
 - Application Overview
 - Key Themes from Public Input
 - Engineering Evaluation, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Consistency with Plans, Policies, and Regulations
 - Opt-In Requirements
 - Next Steps
- **Applicant Remarks**
- **CEC Presentation**
 - Public participation and California Native American tribal consultation opportunities
- **Government Comments**
 - California Native American tribes
 - Government Agencies
 - Elected Officials
- **Public Comment**
- **Next Steps**
- **Closing Comments**
- **Adjourn**



WELCOME



Application Overview

Presented by Lisa Worrall

Project Manager

CEQA Project Management Unit



Soda Mountain Solar Project

- **Applicant:** Soda Mountain Solar, LLC
- **Location**
 - San Bernardino County
 - Approximately 2,670 acres administered by Bureau of Land Management
- **Project**
 - 300 MW solar photovoltaic facility
 - 300 MW (1,200 MWh) battery energy storage system (BESS)
 - Generation-intertie line
 - Interconnection facilities



Source: SWCA Environmental Consultants.
TN 261595 – Figure 2-1 Project Site Vicinity



Timeline

Date	Project Milestones
August 1, 2024	Application Filed
August 2, 2024	Notice of Receipt to MOU Agencies
September 3, 2024	Determination of Incomplete Application and Request for Information
September 27, 2024	Tribal Notification Inviting Consultation
July 31, 2025	Determination of Complete Application
August 29, 2025	Information and Environmental Scoping Meeting
December 29, 2025	Staff Assessment Filed
February 5, 2026	Staff Assessment Public Meeting



Key Themes from Public Input

- **Total Comments To Date: 17**
- Biological Resources
- Air Quality
- Visual Resources
- Fire Risk and Battery Safety
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hydrology Resources

A screenshot of the California Energy Commission website. The header includes the CA.GOV logo, the California Energy Commission logo, and a navigation menu with links for Home, About Us, Analysis & Stats, Efficiency, Funding, and Power Plants. Below the header, the page title is "Docket Log". The docket information is: "Docket: 24-OPT-03", "Project Title: Soda Mountain Solar", and "Generated On: 12/31/2025 5:13:17 PM". At the bottom, there is a filter section labeled "Include:" with checkboxes for "Documents", "Comments", and "Transcripts", all of which are checked. A search icon is also present.



Engineering Evaluation and Consistency with Plans, Policies, and Regulations

Technical Area	Plans, Policies, and Regulations Consistency
Facility Design	Yes
Facility Reliability	N/A
Transmission System Engineering	Yes
Worker Safety and Fire Protection	Yes

N/A = has no applicable plans, policies, and regulations the project must be consistent with.



CEQA Environmental Impacts and Consistency with Plans, Policies, and Regulations

Technical Area	Significant and Unavoidable Impacts?	Plans, Policies, and Regulations Consistency
Air Quality	No	Yes
Biological Resources	Yes	No
Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	No	Yes
Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources	No	Yes
Efficiency and Energy Resources	No	Yes
Geology, Paleontology, and Minerals	No	Yes
Hazards, Hazardous Materials/ Waste, and Wildfire	No	Yes

Technical Area	Significant and Unavoidable Impacts?	Plans, Policies, and Regulations Consistency
Land Use	No	Yes
Noise and Vibration	No	Yes
Public Health	No	Yes
Socioeconomics	No	Yes
Solid Waste Management	No	Yes
Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance	No	Yes
Transportation	No	Yes
Visual Resources	Yes	No
Water Resources	No	Yes



Environmental Topic Area Presentations



Biological Resources

Presented by Chris Huntley

Biological Resources Director

Aspen Environmental Group, CEC Consultant



Existing Conditions

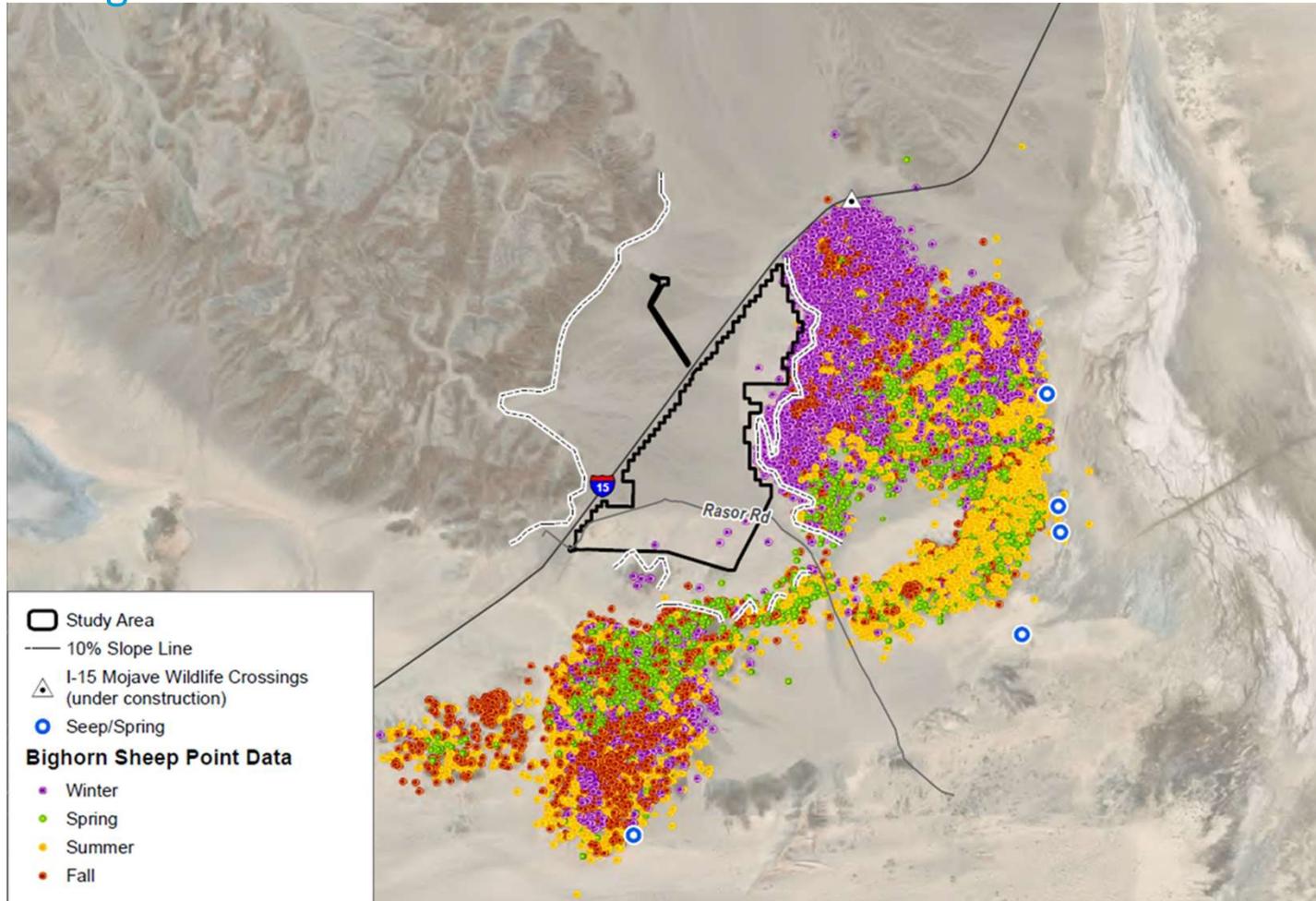
Biological Resources

- Desert lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management
 - Portions open to Off Highway Vehicles
- Desert communities dominated by creosote bush scrub
- Extensive network of ephemeral drainages
- No Critical Habitat present
 - Interconnect located in Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Adjacent to essential desert bighorn sheep habitat and movement corridor



Existing Conditions Continued...

Biological Resources





Sensitive Plants and Wildlife

Biological Resources

- No state or federally listed plants expected
- Other sensitive plant species may occur
- Special-status wildlife known to occur:
 - Desert tortoise (State Endangered/Federally Threatened)
 - Burrowing owl (State Candidate for listing)
 - Desert bighorn sheep (State Fully Protected Species)
- Desert kit fox, Mojave fringe-toed lizard, and other sensitive birds



Conditions of Certification and Impacts

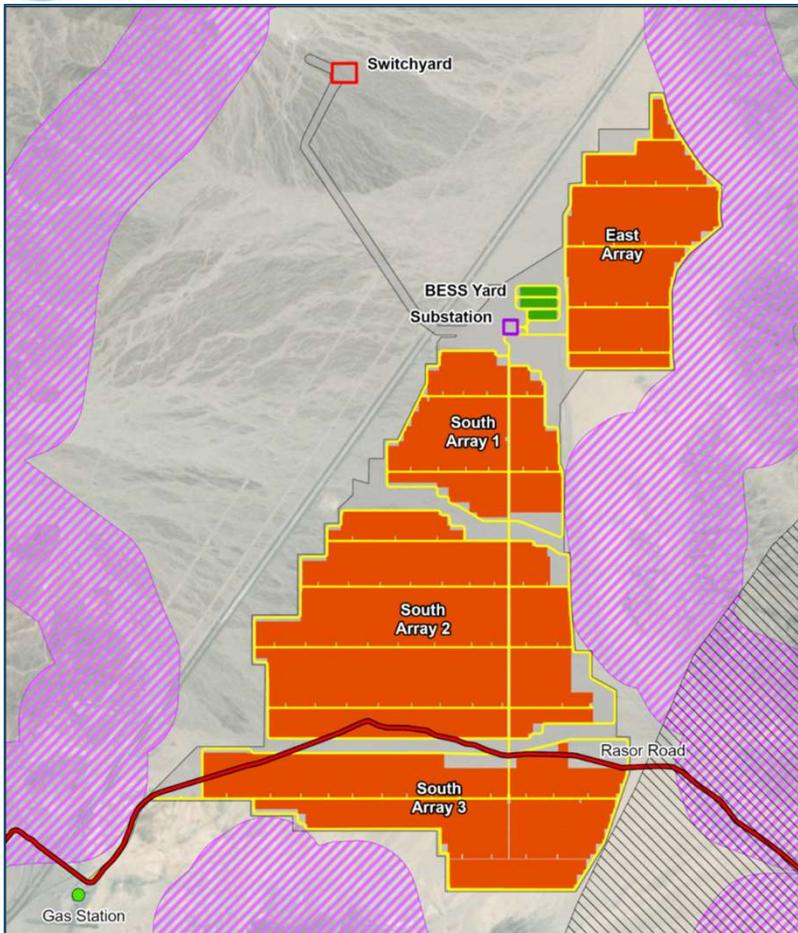
Biological Resources

- 26 Conditions of Certification
 - Pre-construction surveys, translocation, land acquisition, buffers, and post-construction monitoring
 - Construction impacts **less than significant with mitigation except for desert bighorn sheep**
- **Operational Impacts Significant and Unavoidable**
 - Disruption of desert bighorn sheep movement and use of important habitat
 - Potential to jeopardize Soda Mountain herd



Consistency with Plans, Policies, and Regulations

Biological Resources



- Project would not be consistent with California Fish and Game Code protections for Fully Protected Species
- Impacts to desert bighorn sheep are significant and unavoidable
- Impacts would be reduced to less than significant with adoption of Bighorn Sheep Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #1 and Bighorn Sheep Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2



Visual Resources

Presented by Eric Knight

Branch Manager

Siting and Environmental Branch



Scenic Vistas and Scenic Resources (a) and (b)

Visual Resources

(a) Substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? **Less Than Significant**

- No formally designated scenic vista
- Views of project from any informal scenic vista substantially screened by terrain

(b) Substantially damage scenic resources? **No Impact**

- Not within view corridor of any officially designated state scenic highway
- Plans/policies do not identify any scenic resources at site or in project area



Substantially Degrade Existing Visual Character or Quality? (c)

Visual Resources

- “Project prominence” and “visual absorption capability” assessed
- Evaluated change to existing environment from 11 “key observation points” (KOPs)
- Project cannot be camouflaged, disguised, screened, etc.
- Visual character/quality of public views would be substantially degraded
- Visual impact at all KOPs is **Significant and Unavoidable**



Key Observation Point 2 From Northbound Interstate 15 (Looking East)

Visual Resources

Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions Plus Project





Create Substantial Light or Glare? (d)

Visual Resources

- Project site emits no artificial light at night
- “World Atlas Night Sky Brightness” map shows minimal brightness
- Project includes shielded/directed lighting for site access and building access and security
- Project structural surfaces treated to minimize glare
- PV panels will use anti-reflective coatings and track sun
- Visual impact is **Less Than Significant with Mitigation**



Night Sky Brightness

Visual Resources



- Brightness at night - project site, surrounding area, I-15 corridor in eastern San Bernardino County
- Darker the color, the lower the brightness

Source: "World Atlas Night Sky Brightness, Dark Sky Map: Best Locations for Stargazing"



Consistency with Plans, Policies, and Regulations

Visual Resources

Project is not consistent with:

- Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan
 - BLM Visual Resources Management Class III
- San Bernardino County Countywide Plan
 - Land Use, Natural Resources, and Renewable Energy & Conservation Elements
- Several policies pertaining to retention of natural landscape character within San Bernardino County Development Code



Alternatives Analysis

Presented by Lisa Worrall

Project Manager

CEQA Project Management Unit



CEQA Alternatives Process

Alternatives

- Evaluate range of reasonable alternatives that feasibly attain most of basic project objectives while avoiding or substantially reducing significant environmental impacts.
- Compare alternatives to proposed project.
- Evaluate and compare No Project Alternative.
- Eliminate alternatives if infeasible or would not substantially reduce identified significant impacts.
- Identify environmentally superior alternative.



Project Impacts Guiding Selection of the Alternatives

Alternatives

Key impacts of the project:

- Significant and unavoidable impacts to desert bighorn sheep habitat.
- Public safety risks from potential BESS fire near I-15.
- Additional impacts to biological resources, air quality, water resources, and visual resources.



Alternatives Selected for Detailed Evaluation

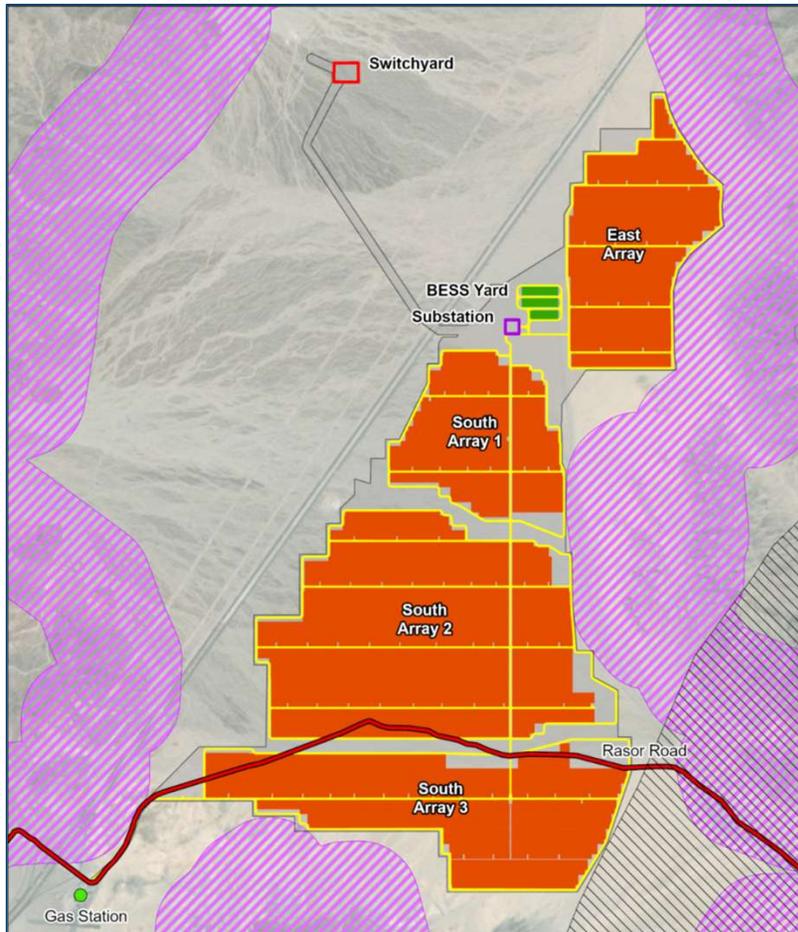
Alternatives

- No Project Alternative
- Bighorn Sheep (BHS) Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #1
- **BHS Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2 (Environmentally Superior Alternative)**



BHS Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2 Environmentally Superior Alternative

Alternatives



- Establishes a 0.25-mile buffer from key desert bighorn sheep habitat.

Relocated Features

- Battery Energy Storage System
- Switchyard
- Access Roads
- Solar Arrays
- Limit of Disturbance

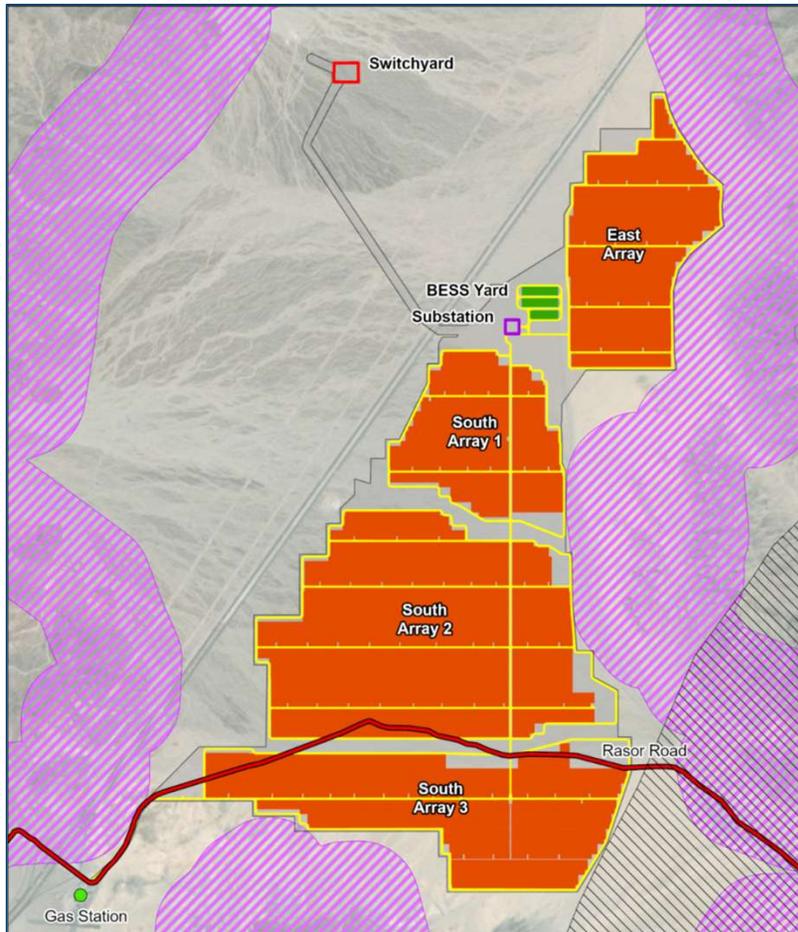
Other Features

- 0.25-mile Buffer from 10% Slope Line
- Substation
- Razor OHV Open Area
- Razor Road
- Gas Station



BHS Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2 Environmentally Superior Alternative

Alternatives



- Relocates BESS approximately 1,100 feet east of I-15 (500 feet east of proposed project BESS location).
- Requires a short gen-tie extension.

Relocated Features

- Battery Energy Storage System
- Switchyard
- Access Roads
- Solar Arrays
- Limit of Disturbance

Other Features

- 0.25-mile Buffer from 10% Slope Line
- Substation
- Rasor OHV Open Area
- Rasor Road
- Gas Station



Opt-In Requirements and Next Steps

Presented by Kaycee Chang

Supervisor

CEQA Project Management Unit



Labor Code Requirement Met

Mandatory Opt-In Requirements

- Not subject to public works provisions
- Commitment to paying prevailing wages
- Use of skilled and trained workforce



Source: [American Institute of Chemical Engineers](#)



Economic Benefit Requirement Met

Mandatory Opt-In Requirements

There shall be a rebuttable presumption that the construction or operation of the facility will have an overall net positive economic benefit to the local government that would have had permitting authority over the site and related facility.



Community Benefits Requirement Met

Mandatory Opt-In Requirements

Legally Binding and Enforceable Agreement:

- Executed agreement with Friends of El Mirage
- Charitable donation to support projects:
 - Improve, protect, and maintain existing trails and dry lake beds
 - Promote understanding, education, and cooperation between all open space users



Friends of El Mirage

- 20471 Mountain View Rd, Adelanto, CA 92301 - (760) 678-0808



Staff Recommended Determination for CEQA Override

- With BHS and Relocated BESS Alternative #2, an override for biological resources impacts is not necessary.
- Impacts to visual resources would remain significant and unavoidable.
- Project provides regional economic benefits, jobs, grid reliability benefits, support for California's renewable energy goals, and displacement of fossil fuel generation.
- Project's significant impacts to visual resources are outweighed by project's benefits.



Next Steps

Timeframe	Activity
February 27, 2026	Close Public Comment Period
March 27, 2026	File Updated Staff Assessment
April 27, 2026	CEC Business Meeting Decision



Applicant Remarks



BREAK

Please return at



Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs



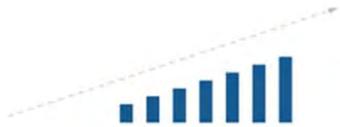
California Energy Commission

Ryan Young, Acting Public Advisor

Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs



Primary Functions of the California Energy Commission



Advancing State Energy Policy



Investing in Energy Innovation



Developing Renewable Energy



Preparing for Energy Emergencies



Achieving Energy Efficiency



Transforming Transportation

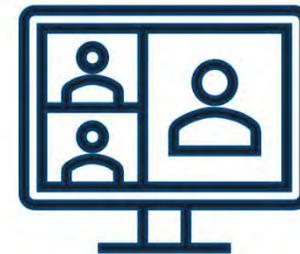


Overseeing Energy Infrastructure



Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs

Advise and support the CEC, stakeholders, California Native American tribes, and interested members of the public in meaningful engagement and participation in CEC programs, policies, and energy equity efforts.





Multiple Ways to Participate

1. Follow
2. Comment
3. Tribal Consultation





Follow Via Web, Email, and Events



Soda Mountain Solar Project

PROJECT OWNER
Soda Mountain Solar, LLC

DOCKET NUMBER
24-OPT-03

CAPACITY
300 megawatts (MW) PV / 300 MW, 1,200 MW-hours storage

LOCATION
San Bernardino County

TECHNOLOGY
Solar Photovoltaic (PV) + Battery Energy Storage

PROJECT STATUS
Under Review

PROJECT TYPE
Opt-In

ORIGINAL PROCEEDING

[Submit e-Comment](#)

[Submit e-Filing](#)

[Docket Log \[24-OPT-03\]](#)

[Exhibit List](#)

[Proof of Service List](#)

[Search All Power Plant Documents](#)

CONTACTS

PROJECT MANAGER
Lisa Worrall
STEPiling@energy.ca.gov
(Please enter project name in the email subject line)

Project Description

Soda Mountain Solar, LLC (applicant), proposes to construct, operate, and maintain a utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) electrical generating and storage facility and associated infrastructure to generate and deliver renewable electricity to the statewide electricity transmission grid. The Soda Mountain Solar Project (project) would generate up to 300 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy and include up to 300 MW of battery storage. The project also includes future decommissioning, which is anticipated to occur after 30

Visit CEC project webpage for links to comment, sign up for email updates, project docket, project information, and more:
<https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/solar-photovoltaic-pv-battery-energy-storage/soda-mountain-solar-project>

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Docket Log

Docket: 24-OPT-03
Project Title: Soda Mountain Solar
Generated On: 1/13/2026 5:29:49 PM

Include: Documents Comments Transcripts

↓ TN #	Docketed Date	Document Title	Exhibit #	To	From
268141	1/6/2026	Soda Mountain Solar Project Biological Resources, Land Use 1 page(s)		CEC Docket Unit	Benjamin Zuckerman
268063	12/29/2025	Staff Memorandum on Record of Proceedings_Attachment 2 359 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	California Energy Commission
268062	12/29/2025	Staff Memorandum on Record of Proceedings_Attachment 1 344 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	California Energy Commission

Visit Docket 24-OPT-03 for free 24/7 access to project documents:
<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=24-OPT-03>



Verbal and Written Comments



<https://www.energy.ca.gov/events>

<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/EComment/ECommentSelectProceeding.aspx>



Tribal Consultation

The CEC invited consultation in this proceeding with California Native American tribes.

Contact: William Larson

Senior Environmental Planner (Archaeologist)

William.Larson@energy.ca.gov

(279) 250-8824



Thank You

Email

publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov

Phone

(916) 957-7910

Online

<https://www.energy.ca.gov/about/divisions-and-offices/office-public-advisor>



Government Comment

California Native American tribes

Government Agencies

Elected Officials



Public Comment



Public Comment

Instruction

- 3 minutes or less per person
- 1 representative per organization

Zoom App/Online

- Click “raise hand”

Telephone

- Press *9 to raise hand
- Press *6 to mute and unmute

When called upon

- CEC staff will open your line
- Unmute, spell name and state affiliation, if any

3-MINUTE TIMER





Next Steps

Timeframe	Activity
February 27, 2026	Close Public Comment Period
March 27, 2026	File Updated Staff Assessment
April 27, 2026	CEC Business Meeting Decision

Visit CEC project webpage for links to comment, sign up for email updates, project docket, project information, and more: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/solar-photovoltaic-pv-battery-energy-storage/soda-mountain-solar-project>





Thank You

List of Presenters (in order of first appearance)

- Kaycee Chang, CEQA Project Management Unit Supervisor
- Drew Bohan, Executive Director
- Noemi Gallardo, Commissioner
- Ryan Young, Acting Public Advisor
- Lisa Worrall, Project Manager
- Chris Huntley, Director of Biological Resources (Aspen Environmental Group), consultant to CEC
- Eric Knight, Branch Manager

Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division

STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov