

<b>DOCKETED</b>	
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<b>TN #:</b>	270373
<b>Document Title:</b>	Karell Reader Comments - Public Safety Concerns during Potential Construction of Seahawk BESS
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*Comment Received From: Karell Reader*  
*Submitted On: 5/30/2026*  
*Docket Number: 26-OPT-02*

## **Public Safety Concerns during Potential Construction of Seahawk BESS**

Please, read and weigh these concerns in an decision to potentially permit a BESS at 90 Minto Road in Watsonville, California

*Additional submitted attachment is included below.*

PO Box 74  
Aptos, CA 95001  
May 28, 2026

Eric Veerkamp, Project Manager  
California Energy Commission  
715 P Street, MS-40  
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Seahawk BESS Project Docket #26-OPT-02

Dear Mr. Veerkamp:

Hello. I am writing today concerning the New Leaf/Sequoia Energy Seahawk BESS project in Santa Cruz County.

In this letter I would like to address concerns with the BESS should it be permitted and built.

Construction of these large industrial-type sites requires massive labor inputs. While New Leaf's sales pitch involves the economic benefit of local jobs, this is somewhat of a misnomer. There will be some local jobs. Many of us can imagine Granite Construction, our very own mega-infrastructure contractor with a full array of government projects, being selected to do the grading, paving, retention ponds, sound walls and engineered concrete work. This of course is of economic benefit to local government and workers.

Unfortunately, that is only a portion of the labor needed to construct a BESS installation. The actual build out with setting up the site with the LFP modules, transformers, inverters, wiring, underground work, substation connections and the more specialized SCADA lay outs are done by uniquely qualified specialists which come from out of the area as itinerants. They often come from states like Tennessee or Texas. They tend to overwhelm small communities requiring varying forms of housing and services.

It is sad to say that the nature of these itinerant crews is often a troublesome problem. Human nature being what it is, members of these crews can be obnoxious, disrespectful of local customs, rapacious, racist, and hostile. One can always hope the contractors choose workers carefully, but this kind of work seems to draw employees with a lack of character. We see this on crews working pipeline construction, dams, exploratory mining, and other transitory projects.

As a result communities need to gear up to maintain public safety. Drunk driving, bar fights, rapes, and illicit transactions can be expected along with raised racial tensions. In order to accommodate this temporary influx without further breaking the County and City of Watsonville budgets, New Leaf/Sequoia Energy will need to fully fund the following at least during the construction period from first shovel to sign off at a minimum:

Two FTE Sheriff's patrol officers  
One Sheriff's detective  
Two FTE Sheriff's Intake and County Jail Guards  
Two FTE Watsonville Police patrol officers  
One Watsonville Police Department detective  
One 911 Emergency Dispatcher

It is hard to say what the judicial costs and jail housing costs for lawbreakers would be during this project, and there is no way to account for damages to the safety of the community. The ultimate minor increase in income from the property tax would not compensate for the costs. Tax dollars should not be applied for any of these costs related to a siting of investor owned utility support business. New Leaf and Sequoia Energy and their contractors would have to be billed actual costs with the expectation that payment would either be made or the County would pull the operator's contract with CPUC under a cease-and-desist order.

If New Leaf and Sequoia Energy are not agreeable to these terms or more stringent considerations, they should not be allowed to build the proposed BESS at 90 Minto Road and their permit application should be denied.

Thank you,  
*Karell Reader*  
Karell Reader  
Aptos, California