

DOCKETED

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*Comment Received From: Deborah Cypert
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Battery Storage Comments

See attached

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

California Energy Commission

Opposition to the Proposed Seahawk Battery Energy Storage System Project (26-0PT-02)

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Deborah Cypert and I am a resident of Watsonville CA . I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed siting of the Seahawk Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Project in Watsonville.

I am respectfully asking the California Energy Commission to deny this project based on the following concerns:

1. Unacceptable Public Safety Risks

The facility's proximity to residential areas raises significant public safety concerns. If a fire, explosion, or toxic fume release from lithium-ion battery fires were to occur, residents would be at risk. These thermal runaway fires are notoriously difficult to extinguish and can release dangerous chemicals, including highly toxic hydrogen fluoride and carcinogenic combusted materials hazardous to public health.

2. Agricultural Impacts

Constructing the facility on or near prime agricultural lands would lead to the permanent devastation of one of Santa Cruz County's most important economic resources. Even though the Seahawk project proposes lithium-based LFP battery types, there remains a substantial risk of fire and thermal runaway events. This level of risk is unacceptable for agricultural land that is both valuable and irreplaceable to the county's economy.

3. Environmental Impacts

There is a clear risk of contamination to College Lake, which is just a few hundred feet downhill from the proposed BESS. The Pajaro Valley Water Agency recently completed an \$80 million water project at College Lake to supply agricultural irrigation water and reduce groundwater pumping, which helps prevent saltwater intrusion into coastal agricultural wells. Contamination of this vital water resource would harm the local agricultural economy and threaten groundwater systems and local wells.

In addition, College Lake is part of a natural riparian and wetlands system in Watsonville, serving as a critical habitat and resting area for migratory waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway.

4. Transportation Impacts

The project is situated near densely populated residential neighborhoods, with access limited to two-lane roads. In the event of an emergency, these roads would quickly become

congested, posing a significant risk to emergency responders, residents, schools, and daycare facilities during evacuation scenarios.

5. Strain on Community Resources

A fire at the proposed facility could place an overwhelming strain on local emergency services and water resources. Additionally, the community could face increased costs for specialized equipment, emergency training, and environmental remediation after a fire, with these costs likely passed on to taxpayers.

6. Development and Zoning Violations

By taking advantage of the AB205 opt-in program, the project applicant is attempting to bypass local authority and disregard zoning laws created to protect the community. This approach leads to non-permitted industrial development on protected agricultural lands, placing projects in areas never intended for such use. As a result, it undermines the local General Plan and puts the county's premier economic contributor at risk.

The California Energy Commission should deny the Seahawk Project permit, regardless of its proximity to the Green Valley Substation.

Please deny this project and any other proposed lithium-ion BESS facilities for Watsonville and Santa Cruz County. The significant risks to public safety, agriculture, the environment, transportation, and community resources, as well as the lack of clear community benefits and the developer's efforts to circumvent local government oversight, far outweigh any potential financial incentives for the developer. The health, safety, environment, and agricultural legacy of Santa Cruz County, as well as the voices of residents, must come first.

Sincerely,

Deborah Cypert

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