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Comment Received From: Becky Steinbruner
Submitted On: 6/29/2026
Docket Number: 26-OPT-02

Project Has No Guaranteed Water Supply Agreement

Dear CEC Staff,

Please deny the Seahawk BESS Project any permit because the applicant has failed to secure a guaranteed water supply source agreement for the site, threatening public health and safety.

If the project is to use the agricultural well on the parcel, there must be an application with the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency and State Water Resources Control Board to recognize the conversion of water use from agricultural to industrial use.

To clear or request a water transfer for 90 Mento Rd. in Watsonville, California, the primary regulatory contact is not just the State Water Board, but also the local groundwater authority. This property sits within the jurisdiction of the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PV Water), which manages the heavily regulated Pajaro groundwater basin.

Because Watsonville relies almost entirely on groundwater, changing water use or transferring allocations requires navigating both state-level water rights and local basin management protocols.

There are Local Basin Restrictions (PV Water)

Before petitioning the state, the applicant must clear the transfer with local rules. The Pajaro Basin is a critically overdrafted basin subject to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

Groundwater Extraction Fees: If the property operates an individual well, it is subject to PV Water augmentation charges.

Agricultural Restrictions: PV Water strictly monitors agricultural versus non-agricultural water usage. Under their Basin Management Plan, transferring agricultural groundwater to industrial operations inside a critically overdrafted basin is heavily scrutinized and often restricted to prevent exacerbating seawater intrusion.

If the Project is to use water from the City of Watsonville, an application process with Santa Cruz County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) must be made and processed because the 90 Minto Road site is outside of the City of Watsonville's Water Service Area. The City of Watsonville currently does not provide water service to 90 Minto Road.

The Santa Cruz County Fire Marshall has reviewed the Project plans and required the

Project applicant to install a new fire hydrant at the site.

What will the water supply be? The applicant has failed to provide that information.

If the Project is built and uses flammable lithium battery technology, a thermal runaway problem would require adequate fire flow at the hydrant to supply sustained water spray to be applied to adjacent metal containers for cooling at the rate of 1400-1600 gallons/minute and sustained for many hours.

Does the applicant have assurance that the City of Watsonville could supply such substantial and sustained volumes of water without threatening the water supply to nearby residential areas, such as Diamond Estates Subdivision or Schapiro Knolls, especially if fire suppression flows were needed at hydrants there concurrently with the thermal runaway suppression flows?

Please deny the Seahawk BESS Project because the applicant has failed to provide proof that there is adequate water supply available at this site for fire suppression and public safety needs.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Becky Steinbruner