

DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	26-OPT-02
Project Title:	Seahawk Battery Energy Storage System
TN #:	271351
Document Title:	PVFPD Letter - Updated
Description:	A formal letter from the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District addressing the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), clarifying its regulatory authority, and providing the District's response regarding the proposed location.
Filer:	Wilson, Jed, A
Organization:	Pajaro Valey Fire Protection District
Submitter Role:	Public Agency
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Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District

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July 8, 2026

California Energy Commission (CEC)
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District Comments Regarding Proposed
Seahawk Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) – Docket No. 26-OPT-02**

California Energy Commission,

We are writing in our capacity as the Board of the Pajaro Valley Fire Protection District (PVFPD) and Fire Chief regarding the BESS project proposed at 90 Minto Road in unincorporated Santa Cruz County (CEC Docket 26-OPT-02).

After reviewing New Leaf Energy's application, we noted that the Watsonville Fire Department (WFD) is listed as the primary responding fire agency. This is incorrect. While PVFPD currently contracts with WFD for response coverage due to proximity, that contract expires in mid-August 2026 and will either be terminated or replaced with an Emergency Medical response agreement. Additionally, contrary to statements made in the letter submitted by the City of Watsonville, there are no auto-aid agreements in place between WFD and PVFPD.

Under SB 283, applicants must formally certify that they have "met and conferred" with the local fire authority at least 30 days prior to submitting their application. PVFPD is the local fire authority for the proposed location. No representatives from New Leaf Energy have met or conferred with PVFPD, nor have they initiated any communication with our Fire Marshal's Office or Board, in the 30-day period leading up to the submission of their application.

PVFPD has been working diligently to prepare for any potential BESS development in our jurisdiction over the past year, with the establishment of an Ad hoc BESS Working Group. Working with Fire Agencies from across the state, leading experts in the field and community groups, to better understand the wide range of impacts this type of facility may have on our district.



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Specifically, but not limited to the following topics:

- **BESS Preparedness** - To support PVFPD's long-term emergency readiness for future BESS projects, we are under contract with a qualified expert firm to ensure comprehensive planning and sustained operational safety. This includes integrated emergency response planning, detailed hazard assessments, development of emergency action procedures, and ongoing operational safety requirements, along with the financial commitments necessary to maintain these capabilities over the life of the project.
- **Code Adoption** - Our Fire Marshal's Office is actively collaborating with industry experts to adopt and enforce the most current and applicable standards governing BESS facilities. This effort includes alignment with the California Fire Code, particularly its evolving provisions for energy storage installations, and full integration of NFPA 855: Standard for the Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems. By incorporating these nationally recognized safety frameworks, we ensure that all future BESS projects meet rigorous, up-to-date requirements for fire protection, system design, hazard mitigation, and operational safety.
- **Infrastructure planning** - We are actively evaluating the development of a second PVFPD facility strategically located to enhance service delivery across the Pajaro Valley community, including the proposed project area. This planning effort focuses on improving emergency response times, expanding operational coverage, and strengthening our ability to protect high-risk zones. A second facility would also allow for the strategic positioning of specialized equipment, advanced suppression resources, and BESS-specific response capabilities, ensuring that PVFPD can meet the evolving needs of the community and mitigate impacts associated with future growth and emerging technologies.

Given these facts, the application's characterization of WFD as the primary fire authority appears to be a significant oversight. We respectfully request that the Commission correct the record and ensure that PVFPD is recognized as the local fire authority for all compliance, consultation, and safety-related requirements under SB 283.



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We look forward to your response and to establishing the appropriate communication pathway with New Leaf Energy.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Martone".

Board Chair Dave Martone

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jake Dellamonica".

Board Vice Chair Jake Dellamonica

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Erbe".

Director Robert Erbe

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ashley Moules".

Director Ashley Moules

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Sampson".

Director John Sampson

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jed Wilson".

Fire Chief Jed Wilson

CC: City of Watsonville, City Council
Tamara Vides, City Manager
Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
Nicole Coburn, Santa Cruz County Executive Officer
Seahawk Battery Energy Storage System
New Leaf Energy, Inc.
CAL FIRE Fighters L2881
Watsonville Firefighter L1272