

DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	26-OPT-02
Project Title:	Seahawk Battery Energy Storage System
TN #:	271680
Document Title:	Diane Dutton-Jones Comments - Unacceptable Geological Hazards of 90 Minto Road and Misinformation in Application Part 1
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Diane Dutton-Jones
Submitter Role:	Public
Submission Date:	7/28/2026 12:19:33 PM
Docketed Date:	7/28/2026

Comment Received From: Diane Dutton-Jones
Submitted On: 7/28/2026
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Unacceptable Geological Hazards of 90 Minto Road and Misinformation in Application Part 1

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to Oppose the New Leaf Energy Seahawk BESS project proposed for 90 Minto Road for two reasons today,

1. To bring to your attention misinformation that appears in the Applicant's Opt-in application, Part 1, TN 270250, and to the Geotechnical Engineering Report presented by Haley and Aldrich, 3-4 Appendices TN270256.
2. This site is in an active seismic zone and should be eliminated for consideration.

It is because of College Lake's current condition and purpose as a year-round water storage reservoir that I am concerned that the geological conclusions made in this application have been based on inaccurate information and may need to be reassessed.

I would like the CEC to clearly see how the geological elements of this specific site at 90 Minto Road represent a set-up for potentially disastrous situations. Here's what we know:

- 1) College Lake is now a year-round water storage reservoir and lake elevation level is greater than 60 feet.
- 2) Liquification is highest in saturated, sandy soils, identified on site at about 16 to 27 ft. below ground surface (bgs), and groundwater is found between 10 to 16 feet bgs.
- 3) The project sits in a seismically active zone.

1) Misinformation - Seasonal Lake/ Ethereal Lake

From Opt-in Application, Part 1, 3.4.1.8 Tsunamis and Seiches, Pp 545

In this section, College Lake is referred to as a seasonal lake that is typically drained each spring.

In Appendix 3-4 A of the Haley Aldrich Geotechnical Engineering Report, Pp 16/243: College Lake is referred to as the ephemeral College Lake.

The current operational storage capacity of College Lake is approximately 1,700 acre-feet. This capacity was achieved through the College Lake Integrated Resources Management Project, which increased the lake's natural storage from about 1,000 acre-feet to the current 1,700 acre-feet. The project, which includes a new weir, intake

facility, water treatment plant, and pipeline, was completed and celebrated in August 2025.

<https://www.pvwater.org/college-lake-project>

Seasonal draining of the lake used to allow the soil to dry out. Now this year-round water storage reservoir, historically a riparian zone, will be greatly influenced by seismic activity such as seiches and liquification due to its continuous saturation level.

From Opt-in Application, 3.4.1.8 Tsunamis and Seiches, Pp 545

Seiches are waves and oscillations within confined or semi-confined bodies of water that are seismically induced by ground shaking.

Opt-in Application, Part 1, Pp 545

Stated in this section: The Elevation of the lake is never higher than 60 feet above mean sea level.

According to the Pajaro Valley Water Agency, A new adjustable weir structure will be built just downstream of the current weir, increasing the water surface area to 285 acres and increasing the storage capacity to around 1,800 acre-feet at an elevation of 62.5 feet.

https://www.pvwater.org/images/projects/College_Lake/PVW_College_Lake_Guide.pdf

Pp 3

This does not account for heavy winter rains that have temporarily elevated the water level beyond 62.5 ft.

2) Liquification

From Opt-in Application, Part 1, Pp 547-548

C Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction

Liquefaction is a geotechnical hazard that is generally highest when saturated, cohesionless soils (e.g., sandy soils) within 50 feet of ground surface are subjected to seismic ground shaking.

From Appendix 3-4 of the Haley and Aldrich Geotechnical Report, Pp 17/243

Sandy soils were identified on site at about 16 to 27 ft. below ground surface (bgs), and groundwater is found between 10 to 16 feet bgs.

From Appendix 3-4 of the Haley and Aldrich Geotechnical Report, Pp 18

Groundwater levels at the Site are expected to be influenced by the nearby College Lake. This ephemeral lake is located approximately 300 ft to the northeast of the Site.

We now know that College Lake is a year-round water storage reservoir, so this example of misinformation, that it is an ephemeral lake, meaning a temporary body of water that is usually dry, produces recommendations built on inaccurate information. The proposed soil mitigation techniques may not be adequate to stop the potential risk of liquification related to seismic ground failure and yet this section was given a Less than Significant rating.

From the Haley Aldrich Geotechnical Engineering Report, 7.3 Ground Improvement, Pp 30: Sandy soils identified below near-surface clays to depths of about 16 to 27 ft bgs across the Site are likely susceptible to the effects of liquefaction during and after a design-level earthquake.

Pp 30 If ground improvement is implemented into Site development plans, it will need to extend through the liquefiable sands and into the deeper non-liquefiable clay soils.

3) Seismically Active Area

In Appendix 3-4 A of the Haley Aldrich Geotechnical Engineering Report, 4.4 Regional Seismicity, Pp 16:

The Site is located near or within the Zayante-Vergeles fault zone.

The subject property has been identified within the Santa Cruz County and State of California designated fault zones associated with the active Zayante Fault.

From Opt-in Application Part 1, Faulting & Seismicity, Pp 544:

The Zayante Fault is considered capable of generating a magnitude 7.0 earthquake.

- The Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989 registered a magnitude of 6.9

The USGS/CGS fault trace sits roughly 200 ft away from the Site's eastern edge, at the base of the hillslope where it meets the ephemeral College Lake. The County's fault trace is shown in pink on Figure 3, with one trace within College Lake, and a second within and parallel to the Site's eastern edge.

In Conclusion

The soil conditions, high water tables, and its close proximity to College Lake, now a year-round water storage reservoir, make this location a high-risk geological hazard zone. This site sits on the Zayante-Vergeles fault, and the San Andreas fault passes approximately 3 to 4 miles to the east, well within the zone of strong to severe shaking and potential surface rupture hazards.

With all these high-risk characteristics, where have the theoretical ground improvement methods, as discussed in the Haley and Aldrich geological report, been proven to be effective against the sheer strength of an earthquake?

With a 25-year project lifespan forecasted for this site and the cumulative geological findings, the probability of a disruptive earthquake exists, putting the health and well-being of the nearby densely populated neighborhoods, the emergency responders, and the billion-dollar agriculture industry that surrounds it at an unconscionable risk.

For these reasons, please deny New Leaf's application to site a BESS at 90 Minto Road.

Thank You,
Diane Dutton-Jones