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Inadequacy of Draft EIR Alternatives Analysis, Specifically Lambie Industrial Park

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

August 25, 2026

California Energy Commission
715 P Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Corby Battery Energy Storage System Project (24-OPT-05) - Comments Regarding Inadequacy of Draft EIR Alternatives Analysis, Specifically Lambie Industrial Park

Dear Commissioners and CEC Staff:

I submit these comments regarding the adequacy of the alternatives analysis contained in the Staff Assessment/Draft Environmental Impact Report ("Draft EIR") for the proposed Corby Battery Energy Storage System ("Corby" or "Project"). The Draft EIR's alternatives analysis raises substantial concerns under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), particularly CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6. Although the Draft EIR identifies alternative sites, project configurations, and energy-storage technologies, merely identifying alternatives does not satisfy CEQA. The analysis must *meaningfully* evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives capable of feasibly attaining most of the Project's basic objectives while avoiding or substantially lessening one or more significant environmental effects.

This issue is particularly important because Solano County specifically identified feasible avenues for reducing Corby's environmental impacts during scoping and expressly requested that CEC evaluate whether the applicant's stated requirements regarding location, capacity, duration, and technology were truly indispensable project objectives rather than preferences that unnecessarily constrain the alternatives analysis.

This is important to me because I am a resident of Solano County and directly impacted by the proposed project as a resident on Kilkenny Road.

I. Solano County Specifically Requested a Meaningful Alternatives Analysis

In its November 19, 2025 scoping comments, Solano County requested a comprehensive alternatives analysis addressing alternative sites, reduced project size, and alternative technologies.

The County specifically requested evaluation of "Site 2," previously referenced in the Application, and directed CEC to compare Prime and Non-Prime Farmland impacts, sensitive receptors, visual effects, biological resources, emergency-service access, and environmental effects associated with a longer gen-tie. The County further cautioned that alternatives should not be rejected through conclusory assertions concerning cost, contractual obligations, or inconvenience to the applicant.

More importantly, Solano County identified actual alternative locations rather than merely suggesting that CEC search for hypothetical sites. The County specifically requested analysis of Lambie Industrial Park, approximately 1,461 acres with an Industrial Land Use designation and Manufacturing General zoning. The County requested comparison of sensitive receptors, thermal-runaway impacts, Travis Air Force Base considerations, gen-tie impacts, biological resources, visual impacts, and Important Farmland impacts.

The County also requested analysis of a location within the Montezuma Wind Energy Center, including consideration of grading, biological resources, topography, transmission requirements, and environmental effects associated with the longer gen-tie.

The County further requested evaluation of a reduced-capacity alternative, such as 200 MW or 225 MW, specifically to determine whether a somewhat smaller project could substantially satisfy Project objectives while reducing site disturbance and conversion of Prime Farmland.

Finally, the County requested detailed consideration of alternative energy-storage technologies, including flow batteries, sodium-ion, iron-air, compressed-air energy storage, and thermal energy storage. These comments provided CEC with a detailed roadmap for a meaningful alternatives analysis.

II. The Draft EIR Should Not Define Project Objectives So Narrowly That Reasonable Alternatives Are Effectively Eliminated

Solano County specifically requested that CEC critically evaluate whether the stated Project objectives—including proximity to the Vaca-Dixon Substation, 300 MW capacity, and four-hour duration—are absolute requirements or could reasonably be modified to reduce environmental impacts.

That issue is fundamental to the adequacy of the alternatives analysis. An alternatives analysis becomes circular if the Project objectives are framed so narrowly that an alternative must duplicate the applicant's preferred location, capacity, interconnection arrangement, technology, and commercial characteristics in order to qualify for meaningful consideration.

CEQA does not require an alternative to satisfy every project objective. CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6 requires an EIR to consider alternatives capable of feasibly attaining most of the basic objectives while avoiding or substantially lessening significant environmental effects. The Guidelines recognize that an alternative may impede attainment of some project objectives or may be more costly and nevertheless warrant consideration.

The fundamental inquiry should therefore be whether an alternative could provide substantial grid-connected energy storage and advance the Project's basic energy and reliability purposes while reducing significant environmental impacts.

The Draft EIR should explain why exact proximity to Vaca-Dixon, exactly 300 MW of capacity, exactly four hours of duration, and the applicant's existing interconnection arrangements are indispensable environmental or operational requirements rather than characteristics of NextEra's preferred project. Without that distinction, the Project objectives risk becoming a mechanism for protecting the proposed project from meaningful comparison.

III. Lambie Industrial Park Warrants Particularly Rigorous Analysis

Lambie Industrial Park presents an especially important test of the adequacy of the alternatives analysis. Lambie was specifically identified by Solano County and its Board of Supervisors as a location potentially suitable for BESS development. According to the County's scoping comments, the approximately 1,461-acre location carries an Industrial Land Use designation and Manufacturing General zoning.

An industrially designated alternative could potentially avoid or substantially reduce conversion of Prime Farmland; reduce conflict with agricultural land-use policies; place industrial energy infrastructure within an industrial rather than rural agricultural setting; avoid impacts to the setting of the Kilkenny historical resource; reduce degradation of rural agricultural visual character; and potentially provide greater separation from sensitive receptors.

Those are substantial potential environmental advantages. Lambie may also have disadvantages. A longer gen-tie could create additional biological, agricultural, visual, construction, and transmission impacts. Those impacts must be fully considered. But that is precisely the comparative analysis CEQA requires.

It is not sufficient to identify the longer transmission connection or the applicant's existing Vaca-Dixon interconnection arrangement and conclude that Corby is preferable. The Draft EIR should disclose the environmental tradeoffs in sufficient detail to allow the public and decision-makers to determine whether the environmental benefits of industrial siting outweigh the impacts associated with a longer transmission connection.

If Staff concludes that Lambie is infeasible, that conclusion should be supported by evidence demonstrating actual infeasibility rather than applicant preference, additional cost, loss of an existing interconnection advantage, delay, or greater development difficulty.

IV. Existing Interconnection and Commercial Arrangements Should Not Predetermine the Environmental Review

The applicant's existing interconnection position and commercial arrangements are relevant considerations, but they should not become substitutes for environmental analysis.

There is an important distinction between demonstrating that an alternative would require a materially different transmission connection, incur identified environmental impacts, create documented technical problems, or result in costs so substantial that the alternative is actually economically infeasible, and merely observing that the applicant already possesses a more advantageous arrangement at the proposed site.

The former constitutes evidence relevant to feasibility. The latter risks allowing decisions made by the applicant before completion of CEQA review to predetermine the outcome of the alternatives analysis.

Solano County expressly cautioned CEC that a good-faith alternatives analysis will inevitably include alternatives that are more costly to the project proponent and that alternatives should not be rejected through conclusory assertions concerning economic infeasibility, cost, or contractual obligations. CEC should directly address that concern.

V. A Reduced-Capacity Alternative Requires Meaningful Consideration

Solano County specifically requested analysis of a reduced-capacity alternative, such as 200 MW or 225 MW rather than 300 MW. This alternative deserves serious consideration.

A 200- or 225-MW BESS would remain a very substantial grid-storage project and could potentially continue to accomplish most of the basic energy-storage and grid-reliability objectives while reducing environmental impacts associated with the proposed facility.

Depending upon configuration, reduced capacity could potentially result in fewer battery enclosures; reduced acreage and site disturbance; reduced conversion of Prime Farmland; reduced construction activity; reduced operational noise; reduced visual intrusion; greater setbacks from surrounding properties; greater separation between battery enclosures; reduced aggregate hazardous-material inventory; and potentially reduced consequences associated with a major thermal-runaway event.

The appropriate CEQA question is not whether the applicant prefers 300 MW or has commercial arrangements based upon that capacity. The question is whether a 200- or 225-MW project could

feasibly attain most of Corby's basic objectives while substantially reducing environmental harm. The Draft EIR should have provided a reasoned answer supported by evidence.

VI. Alternative Energy-Storage Technologies Should Be Evaluated Based Upon Their Ability to Reduce Corby's Environmental Effects

Solano County also requested consideration of flow batteries, sodium-ion batteries, iron-air batteries, compressed-air energy storage, and thermal energy storage.

This issue takes on particular significance because one of Corby's most controversial environmental risks arises from the proposed lithium-ion technology: thermal runaway and the associated potential release of toxic gases, aerosols, particulates, and other combustion or decomposition products.

The County specifically identified alternative technologies in part because some may present substantially different fire and thermal-runaway characteristics. Accordingly, the alternatives analysis should not simply catalog disadvantages of alternative technologies relative to lithium-ion technology. Virtually every meaningful alternative will have some disadvantage compared with the applicant's preferred project.

The relevant CEQA inquiry is comparative: Could an alternative storage technology feasibly accomplish most of the Project's basic energy-storage objectives while substantially reducing thermal-runaway, public-health, agricultural-contamination, emergency-response, or other significant environmental risks?

For example, if a flow-battery technology materially reduces or eliminates the type of thermal-runaway propagation risk associated with lithium-ion batteries, that environmental advantage should receive meaningful consideration even if the technology requires a larger footprint, has different efficiency characteristics, or costs more.

Likewise, iron-air, sodium-ion, compressed-air, and thermal-storage technologies should not be rejected merely because they do not duplicate every operational characteristic of the applicant's preferred CATL lithium-ion system. CEC should identify the environmental advantages and disadvantages of each reasonable technology alternative and explain, with substantial evidence, why an alternative capable of substantially reducing significant environmental impacts is or is not feasible.

VII. Public-Safety Consequences Should Receive Meaningful Weight in Comparing Alternatives

Solano County expressly directed CEC to give appropriate weight to public-safety risks when evaluating alternatives. That direction is particularly important given the County's extensive scoping comments concerning thermal runaway, toxic-air emissions, emergency response, evacuation, contaminated runoff, agricultural deposition, and impacts to surrounding residents.

The alternatives analysis should therefore compare not simply whether different sites can physically accommodate a BESS, but the consequences of placing the same hazard in different environmental settings.

A thermal-runaway event at an industrial site farther from sensitive receptors would have materially different environmental and public-health consequences than the same event at an agricultural site surrounded by residences, productive farmland, rural roads, historical resources, near Interstate 80 and other sensitive uses.

Similarly, an alternative technology with a substantially different thermal-runaway profile may reduce an environmental risk even if other characteristics are less favorable. The alternatives analysis should reflect those distinctions.

VIII. Prime Farmland Conversion Should Be a Central Factor in the Alternatives Analysis

The proposed Corby location would convert agricultural land to large-scale industrial energy use. Solano County specifically requested that CEC give appropriate weight to permanent conversion of Prime Farmland when comparing alternatives.

This is particularly significant because an industrially designated alternative has been specifically identified. If an alternative can substantially avoid Prime Farmland conversion while accomplishing most of the Project's basic energy-storage objectives, that is precisely the type of environmental advantage an EIR alternatives analysis is intended to disclose.

CEC should not minimize this difference based upon an assumption that the Corby property can simply be restored to equivalent agricultural productivity after decades of industrial use. Any conclusion that the conversion is temporary must be supported by substantial evidence concerning soil compaction, infrastructure removal, soil restoration, recovery time, and the ability to restore comparable agricultural productivity after decommissioning.

IX. The Alternatives Analysis Must Reveal the Environmental Tradeoffs, Not Merely Identify Reasons to Retain the Proposed Project

The alternatives analysis must allow a decision-maker to see clearly how the proposed Corby site compares with reasonable alternatives. A longer gen-tie may produce additional impacts that ultimately make an alternative environmentally inferior, but the EIR must demonstrate that through a meaningful comparison rather than invoke the gen-tie, interconnection position, cost, schedule, or applicant preference as shorthand for infeasibility.

The same principle applies to reduced capacity and alternative technologies. The EIR should identify which significant or potentially significant effects would be avoided or reduced, which new effects would arise, and why the balance supports retention or rejection of the alternative. CEQA's informational purpose is not served if the alternatives discussion principally explains why the proposed project is more convenient to the applicant rather than illuminating the environmental tradeoffs for the public and decision-makers.

Illustrative Corby-Lambie Environmental Comparison

Environmental Consideration	Proposed Corby Site	Industrial-Site Alternative
Prime Farmland conversion	Significant concern	Potentially reduced or avoided
Agricultural land-use conflict	Substantial	Potentially reduced
Industrial compatibility	Industrial use introduced into agricultural setting	Industrial setting
Kilkenny historical setting	Potential adverse effect	Potentially avoided
Rural visual character	Industrial-scale development introduced	Potentially reduced conflict
Sensitive receptors	Existing nearby receptors	Comparative distance should be quantified
Thermal-runaway consequence	Agricultural/residential surroundings	Model at actual alternative-site receptor distances

Gen-tie impacts	Shorter connection	Longer connection with additional impacts
Interconnection	Existing advantage	Potential delay/reconfiguration

X. Requested Action

Before certification of the Corby Project, CEC should revise or supplement the alternatives analysis to demonstrate that it has evaluated a reasonable range of alternatives capable of attaining most of the Project's basic objectives while avoiding or substantially reducing significant environmental effects.

In particular, CEC should provide a transparent, evidence-based comparison of Lambie Industrial Park and other reasonable alternative sites; meaningfully evaluate a reduced-capacity alternative; evaluate reasonable alternative storage technologies based on their environmental advantages as well as their disadvantages; distinguish true feasibility constraints from applicant preferences, contractual arrangements, cost, schedule, or existing interconnection advantages; and explain why any environmentally superior alternative is infeasible if CEC proposes to reject it.

Given Solano County's detailed scoping comments, the Draft EIR should also expressly explain how the alternatives analysis responded to the County's request that CEC test whether proximity to Vaca-Dixon, 300 MW capacity, four-hour duration, and lithium-ion technology are indispensable requirements or modifiable project characteristics.

These issues must be resolved through environmental analysis supported by substantial evidence before the Commission relies upon the Draft EIR to approve the Project.

Respectfully submitted,

Name: Linda Geller
Date: August 25, 2026