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BEFORE THE
CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION
JOINT COMMITTEE CONFERENCE

In the matter of,

Pecho Energy Storage Center
Docket No. 21-AFC-01

In the matter of,

Gem Energy Storage Center
Docket No. 21-AFC-02

IN PERSON AND REMOTE VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

Warren-Alquist State Energy Building
Rosenfeld Hearing Room (Hearing Room A)
1516 9th Street,
Sacramento, CA 95814

MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2022
2:00 P.M.

Reported By:
Peter Petty
APPEARANCES

Committee Members

Commissioner, Andrew McAllister, Presiding Member of Pecho and Associate Member of Gem

Commissioner, Kourtney Vaccaro, Presiding Member of Gem and Associate Member of Pecho

Bryan Early, Advisor to Commissioner Andrew McAllister

Eli Harland, Advisor to Commissioner Kourtney Vaccaro

Natalie Lee, Advisor to Commissioner Kourtney Vaccaro

Ralph Lee, Hearing Officer, California Energy Commission

Renee Webster-Hawkins, Hearing Officer, California Energy Commission

Staff Present

Dian Vorters, Assistant Chief Counsel

Jared Babula, Lead Counsel

Jennifer Baldwin, Lead Counsel

Lisa Worrall, Project Manager

Leonidas Payne, Project manager

Rosemary Avalos, Public Advisor’s Office

Applicants

Stephen O’Kane, Senior Director Hydrostor, Inc.

Jeffery D. Harris, Attorney at Law

Samantha Neumyer, Attorney at Law

Ellison Schneider Harris & Donlan, LLP

Public Agencies

Peter Sanzenbacher, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Public Comment

Mark Bucis

Christopher VerPlanck

Linda Mahnken

Charlene Bucis
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COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Welcome, everyone.

We are here at the Joint Committee Conference for the
Pecho and Gem — regarding the proceedings on the
applications for certification for the Pecho Energy
Storage Center, and the Gem Energy Storage Center.

The California Energy Commission has assigned a
committee of two commissioners for each of these
proceedings. I am Andrew McAllister, the presiding
member of the Pecho committee, and Commissioner Vaccaro
is the associate member. On the Gem committee,
Commissioner Vaccaro is the presiding member, and I am
the associate member.

So, I wanted to begin the formalities with
introducing some of the other people in attendance here
today. So first, to my left, Brian Early, my advisor —
um, to (indiscernible) — to my office, and here also
with us we have Eli Harland, advisor to Commissioner
Vaccaro, and Natalie Lee, another advisor to
Commissioner Vaccaro.

We have Rene Webster-Hawkins, the Hearing
Officer for the Gem Committee, and we have Ralph Lee,
the Hearing Officer for the Pecho proceedings. I would
also like to introduce Rosemary Avalos, I think she will
be here for the public — oh I can’t — I don’t see her,
Okay. Oh, there she is, great. Okay. Welcome,
Rosemary, thanks for being with us, from the Energy
Commissions Public Advisors office.

Although parties were not required to attend
today’s committee conference, I believe representatives
from the parties may be in attendance. I would ask
parties to identify and introduce themselves and their
representatives at this time, starting with the Pecho
applicant.

So, applicants?

MR. O’KANE: Thank you Commissioner. My name is
Stephen O’Kane, Senior Director, Project Development for
Hydrostor, and I’m here representing the applicant for
both the Gem and the Pecho project.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Okay, great.

MR. HARRIS: Good afternoon, I’m Jeff Harris.
I’m with Ellison, Schneider, Harris and Donlan here in
Sacramento. We’re here on behalf of both applicants.
My partner, Samantha Neumyer, is trying to hide behind
me, but she’s here too, as well. And it’s nice to be
here in person, and Commissioner Vaccaro finally got me
in the penalty box over here, so I think we’re good.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: I’ll try not to throw
any hockey pucks during the course of the day. So,
anybody else — so, Mr. O’Kane, thanks for being here.

Any colleagues with you today?

No? Okay.

(Pause)

MR. O’KANE: Uh, we do have a few on the phone, I’m not sure if we want to go through all of those.

Dave Stein, our consultant with Golder WSP is here.

(Pause)

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Okay, just to the extent that they might be participating today, it would be helpful to have them introduced.

Okay. Great, okay.

Um, and, let’s see, just to keep it very clear for the court reporter, who do we have appearing for the applicant in the Gem proceeding?

MR. O’KANE: Uh, Applicant for Gem, Steven O’Kane, pro— Senior — Director of Project Development for Gem.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Great, and representing?

MR. HARRIS: Um, Mr. Harris, and my partner Ms. Neumyer as well.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Great, thank you.

Okay, staff for the Pecho proceeding, could you introduce yourself?
MS. VORTERS: Alright, I’m Diane Vorters, Assistant Chief Counsel for the Advocacy and Compliance Unit on behalf of both Gem and Pecho, and I’m here with Lead Counsel.

MR. BABULA: Hi, this is Jared Babula, I’m Lead Counsel for the Pecho project. And then we have, in the audience here, Jennifer Baldwin, who is Lead Counsel for Gem project. And we also have technical staff that’s called in and is available to answer questions as necessary.

COMMISSIONER McALLISTER: Okay. Thank you very much.

Alright. Now I want to invite any representatives from public agencies who might be in the room, or on the phone, or tribal governments as well, to introduce themselves.

(Pause)

Looking over at our coordinators here.

MS. AVALOS: Anybody who’s wishing to speak on Zoom, go ahead and unmute yourself, you have the option to, if you want to speak up.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McALLISTER: So, I’m — it doesn’t appear that we have any public agency or tribal representatives in the room, but — moving to Zoom, do we
have any representatives on public agencies?

MR. SANZENBACHER: Hello, this is Peter Sanzenbacher, I work for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and I’m based out of the Palm Springs office.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Great, thank you.

Anyone else?

(Pause)

It appears not. It would be helpful if folks, if they come on if they’re late, to identify themselves on the Zoom so that we can know who's in attendance.

Let’s see. So, I, should I read through the — all the potential representatives? Sounds like we don’t have any, and we — potentially from US EPA Region 9.

Let’s see, anyone from the Air Resources Board?

(Pause)

Anyone from the California Coastal Commission?

(Pause)

Okay, hearing none. Elected or appointed officials from State, County, or Local jurisdictions?

(Pause)

For either Pecho or for Gem?

(Pause)

No hands. Okay.

(Pause)

Great. Okay, so we’ll consider it — everyone
has taken roll fully, so um, with no other attendees to
be introduced, I’ll pass the microphone to Commissioner
Vaccaro.

COMMISSIONER VACCARO: Thank you. I’ll keep my
remarks brief. I feel like today is pretty momentous,
it’s been a long time coming for us to all be in the
same room again, it’s been years. And it is just a
pleasure to be able to be on both of these committees,
and to see all of you here today.

I see a lot of familiar faces, I see new faces,
but I’m feeling very happy to be here, but my happiness
is still tempered by recognizing there’s a seriousness
to the questions presented and the work we have to do
here. But really appreciate that everyone was able to
be here today in person.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Thank you very much,
Commissioner Vaccaro, and I’m looking for — I’ve been
looking forward to partnering with you on both of these
cases. And I’d say they’re momentous for a couple of
reasons, just because, well, primarily because they are
a new type of resource that we’re considering at the
Commission, that really is something novel. And so
that’s part way why I think these cases are important,
and supporting the fact that they support our clean
energy transition, potentially, makes them, sort of puts
a finer point on — on these two cases.

And, you know, obviously we — we need various
types of storage. For we don’t — do need formally at
the commission, but I think all of us understand the —
the challenge of transitioning to a clean energy economy
and the need for various types of storage, a diversity
of storage technologies. So obviously, not to — not to
place any judgement on what will happen in these
proceedings, but just to highlight the uniqueness and
the novelty of these two projects coming to the
Commission. So, looking forward to getting started.

With that, I’ll pass the microphone to Mr. Lee.

MR. LEE: Thank you, and good afternoon. My
name is Ralph Lee, Hearing Officer with the California
Energy Commission. My role is to assist the committee
with the conduct of committee events, like today’s Joint
Committee Conference, and with the preparation of
documents such as orders, notices and decisions.

I’m Hearing Officer in the Pecho proceeding, but
for convenience today I’ll be leading the discussions
today in both the Gem and Pecho proceedings. As
mentioned today, Renee Webster-Hawkins is with us as the
Hearing Officer for the Gem proceeding.

Notice for today’s Joint Committee Conference
was filed in the Docket for both Pecho and Gem, on April
15th, 2022, in both English and Spanish. The Energy Commission created an online docket for documents associated with these proceedings.

Pecho is Docket #21-AFC-01, Gem is Docket #21-AFC-02. The notice of today’s event, and other documents related to these proceedings are available on the Energy Commission’s website in the electronic docket for each respective proceeding.

We’re conducting today’s Joint Committee Conference in person. We’re also allowing participation by Zoom. We set up today’s Zoom meeting so that most participants will not be able to mute or unmute themselves to speak. You will have an opportunity to speak during the public comment period, as I’ll describe in a moment. You may still mute your phone by pressing star-six, and you should still be able to hear this Joint Committee Conference.

If you wish to be recognized, please use the raise-hand feature. If you are connected to Zoom by your phone, press star-nine to raise your hand. If you muted your line by pressing star-six, please be sure to unmute yourself by pressing star-six again. The raise-hand feature creates a list of speakers based on the time when your hand was raised, and we will call on you in that order.

And if we missed anybody when we were taking
attendance today, public agencies or tribal governments, please feel free to use the raise-hand feature now to let us know you are here and I’ll take a moment at the end of this presentation to give you an opportunity to introduce yourself.

Today we have a court reporter transcribing all the statements made and any questions asked. I therefore must ask that only one person speak at a time. Also, the court reporter is not in the room, so I would ask that you identify yourself before you speak.

When you speak for the first time, please say and spell your name slowly for the record. That’s important for me, and for the court reporter. If you don’t identify yourself, either the court reporter or I may interrupt you to make sure that you do so to make sure that we have a complete and accurate record from — for today’s Committee Conference.

If you run into any technical difficulties with Zoom, please contact the Public Advisor’s office, or Zoom’s help center. Contact information for both is listed on page six of the Notice of today’s Joint Committee Conference.

At this time I’ll ask are there any questions?

(Pause)

And, I’m also looking to see if — if there are
any um — if anyone wants to identify themselves from any agencies or tribal governments. Okay. I’m not seeing any hands, so I’ll move on.

(Pause)

The primary purpose of today’s Joint Committee Conference is for the Committees for the Gem and Pecho proceedings to deliberate in closed session, specifically regarding the potential qualification of the Pecho and Gem applications to be exempted from the Energy Commission’s Notice of Intention process. As stated in the notice, no oral arguments are going to be taken on that subject.

First, I’m going to give an overview of the Pecho and Gem applications. Then we'll allow a check in with the parties for any questions for the committee. Next, we’ll take public comment, and then the committee will recess to closed session. Finally, we’ll return here to adjourn and conclude this Joint Committee Conference.

So now, I’ll turn to a brief overview of the applications, starting with the Pecho application.

On November 23rd, 2021, Pecho LD Energy Storage, LLC filed an application for certification to operate the Pecho Energy Storage Center, to be located in unincorporated San Luis Obispo County at 2284 Adobe Rd.,
near Morro Bay, California. The site is currently leased for agricultural operations. It’s designated as prime agricultural land, and located in an agricultural zone within the Coastal Zone of San Luis Obispo County. The site is under a Williamson Act contract.

Pecho would be a nominal 400-megawatt energy storage center, deploying Hydrostor Inc.’s Advanced Compressed Air Energy Storage technology, or A-CAES, or “A-Case,” for short.

Hydrostor’s technology would provide low cost long duration fossil fuel and greenhouse gas emission free energy storage, providing generation capacity and ancillary grid services with up to a 50-year facility life.

Pecho would be designed to charge at up to 400 megawatts for up to 14 hours, and then deliver up to 3,200 megawatt hours of electricity to the grid over an eight-hour period when discharging at nameplate capacity.

Pecho would require, among other things, the construction of four all electric air compressor trains, and four 100-megawatt air driven power turbine generators, housed inside a 100 foot tall, 65 foot wide, 1,075 foot long main turbine hall and compressor building.

Pecho would also require the construction of a...
purpose-built underground compressed air storage cavern approximately 2,000 feet deep, a sealed air conduit and above ground 27-acre water reservoir, on-site substation, and a 3.4 mile electrical interconnection to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s existing Morrow Bay substat—switching station.

Now, turning to Gem. On December 1st, 2021, Gem A-CAES, LLC, filed an application of certification with the California Energy Commission to construct and operate the GEM Energy Storage Center in unincorporated Kern County, in Rosamond, California.

The site is currently undeveloped desert land, in an area zoned Estate, and within the Willow Springs Specific Plan Area of Kern County. Gem would be a nominal 500-megawatt energy storage center, which would also deploy Hydrostor’s previously mentioned technology.

Gem would charge at up to 500 megawatts for up to 14 hours, and then deliver up to 4,000 megawatt hours of electricity to the grid over an eight-hour period, when charging at nameplate capacity.

Gem would require, among other things, the construction of five all electric air compressor trains, and five 100-megawatt air driven power turbine generators, housed inside a 100-foot tall, 65 foot wide by 1,365 foot long main turbine hall and compressor.
building.

Gem would also require construction of a purpose-built underground compressed storage cavern approximately 2,000 feet deep, a sealed air conduit, an above ground 31-acre water reservoir, on site substation, and a 10.9 mile interconnection to the Southern California Edison existing Whirlwind Substation, or a 3.5 mile substation to the future Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Rosamond Substation.

And that concludes my overview of the applications, and now I would like to give the parties the opportunity to check in with any questions or comments starting with the applicants for Gem and Pecho.

MR. HARRIS: Uh, thank you, Hearing Officer.

Jeff Harris, on behalf of Gem and Pecho.

Really want to thank the Committee for holding this conference. It’s really nice to see people in person, it’s been said from the dais, and I want to echo that, for sure. I never thought I’d be so happy to be in this room. So, um, here I am.

Thank you very much for having this conference. Our most recent email was, was really kind of to advance these issues. And we asked for an April meeting, pretty much expecting that we’d probably hear the NOI issued in May, with data adequacy maybe in June. So that’s sort
of the way we’re seeing things fall out. It makes sense
to us to have the NOI issue resolved first, because data
adequacy is framed up in the question of data adequacy
for what process. So, we’re hopeful for a May ’22
business meeting on that NOI issue.

Having said that, we are more interested in
getting this right than we are in getting it fast. We
think the answer is pretty clear. But, we acknowledge
that there are some issues of first impression here.
Right. There are things that the Commission hasn’t had
to deal with in the past.

No agency has more experience siting major
infrastructure projects than this agency. Um, you do it
well, you do it right. And, having said that though,
there are some issues of first impression. I think this
is the first, you know, large, advanced compressed air
energy storage facility to come before the commission.

It has raised this, sort of NOI issue that was
sort of, I think dealt with the legislature sort of a
band-aid procedure in the 1990’s, and it’s sort of been
hanging out there as something that hasn’t had to be
addressed in this context. And I think we’ve got an
opportunity here to really deal with that issue.

Schedule wise, it’s critically important to us
that we proceed down the AFC track. We are already time
constrained, so from a commercial perspective,
absolutely critical that we get to the AFC process.

Um, from a — and I know you don’t want oral arguments today, um, but on the merits basis too, we think there are very good arguments for, um, for why the NOI is really a vestige of the previous monopoly era, a bygone era, when the only thing that was ever sited was sited by investor owned utilities, and so — and we’ve laid those out in our papers, and again I want to be very careful not to edge up on the line of oral argument, but we will answer any questions you might have about our prior filings. So let me leave it there.

I want to thank you for being proactive in setting this conference. I want to thank the staff for their thoughtful response as well. I think their response reflects the fact that there are some sort of unique issues here that need to be dealt with seriously, and will set a good precedent for us, moving forward.

These are really critical, important projects that I think the State of California needs to meet our climate goals. And, so, given those objectives, we think it’s really important that we advance these as quickly as we can. Again, with the emphasis on getting the right answer. So. You know the Governor has identified long-duration storage in his budget, the PUC has recognized that it’s definitely part of what we need
to make — make these projects move forward. And so, I’m available to answer any questions you might have on the NOI issues. I think our first filing is the one I would stand on. Second one is more detailed, and I think I’ll ask Steven O’Kane to give you kind of a quick overview on where we are with data adequacy issues as well.

MR. O’KANE: Thank you. Uh, Stephen O’Kane, S-T-E-P-H-E-N, last name O’Kane, O apostrophe K-A-N-E, with Hydrostor. I am the Senior Director of Project Development, and representing both projects.

Actually, I — as my phone just went off — with respect to data adequacy on our project, the Gem project, we have filed information today to advance that project, get closer to data adequacy. I think we have about 90-95% of everything that has been asked for by the staff. One minor filing still to come as we wait for some information from another state agency actually, the State Cultural Clearinghouse, on some cultural resource data.

We are excited about these projects, as Mr. Harris explained, these, we believe these are consistent with and advance California’s policy towards green energy, and very unique projects with long-term cost-effective storage, using really conventional methods.

I think these — this — when you get into the
details you find that they’re relatively simple to understand, using proven technology, but not been done with the — scale and of the — the technology that Hydrostor has been able to come up with to make it that much more efficient.

The only thing I’d like to leave you with, we’ve talked a little bit about schedule, and I’m sure you hear all the time from applicants, “schedule, schedule, schedule, it’s so important,” but what really makes us different is the very, very long construction period.

It’s unusual. You know, we’re building power plants that the Energy Commission is used to looking at sort of two to three year time frames, where the — these projects with the deep underground st— caverns, we’re looking at a four to five year construction period and commissioning. So, it’s significantly longer than traditional plants, but, as we said, no fossil fuels, no emissions, no hazardous materials of significant quantities, it’s really just air, water, and gravity that make these things work. So, we are quite excited about that, and quite excited about moving the process forward. Thank you.

MR. LEE: Yeah, thank you. Staff, did you have any comments?

MR. BABULA: Yes, thank you. This is Jared
Babula, J-A-R-E-D B-A-B-U-L-A, Staff Counsel. And just a couple quick comments — the staff has previously submitted and filed a response to what the applicant filed. And I’d just like to take this opportunity to make some clarifications.

So, staff has reviewed and considered the arguments that the applicant had made, especially in their most recent filing in March. And this pertains to three kind of areas: reliability, the scale-up determination, and the — establishing the, um, uniqueness of the site.

And so, after reviewing and considering the arguments regarding the reliability and scale-up information that staff had requested, that there should be supplemental information. Staff (indiscernible) that the applicant has made a reasonable argument, that those issues aren’t really necessary and related to the determination of whether the exemption for an NOI applies. So, we don’t believe that that level of information is necessary at this point in time. Again, related to some of their requests for additional information on like the economics and the reliability and the scale-up application. So, for that — that um — those components, staff doesn’t think that’s necessary.

The remaining issue of, just um —
feasibility and the uniqueness of the site. Staff recognizes that the exemption that we’re all looking at, and the Public Resources Code 25540.6, Subdivision 83, is that there’s a number of reasonable readings, and the position in which the applicant has taken in their submission is not unreasonable. And so, while staff still has concerns about whether they’ve shown enough information at this point to establish the features of this site as being unique or limited, their position and what they recently argued is not unreasonable.

And so, with that, we would hope the — it would help the Commission — or the Committee when you go into closed session, reflect on that. And then, we’ll be happy to supplement, if necessary, and if there’s questions to answer, and so forth, on our staff position on those issues.

That’s all I have. Let me just check anybody from technical staff, you’re not raising their hands or anything, so I haven’t caused any concerns there. Okay.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Okay, well thank you, everyone. Let’s see. I gu— so, um — Mr. Babula, I guess, uh — so, in terms of the sort of — the NOI versus the um — you know, the AFC, in your view, what’s — what are the specific questions that could go either way?
MR. BABULA: Yeah, I would say that the challenge here with this exemption we’re looking at, and it’s one sentence, it’s — it’s — so you’ll be exempt from having to do the NOI if your — you show that you’ll have a thermal power plant, which is only technologically or economically feasible to site at or near the energy source. And, so, there — the writings and what’s been filed to date is the cavern reflects an energy source, because that’s where the compressed air is gonna be.

The uniqueness of this is that the cavern is part of the project. And, so, they’re not only, they’re not coming to an energy source, they’re building the energy source to. And so that’s the area to dig into, is how do you reconcile a project that’s building their energy source, with this one sentence exemption that’s in our statute.

So, I would frame it as: is it the real, is — do you solely focus on the relationship of the power plant part, which would be like the turbines, and the subser — the stuff above the, on the surface, in relation to the cavern, or the energy source, and that’s the only thing you have to care about? Or, do you look at it broader, in the context of the site — the project as a whole to the site. The project being the stuff on the
surface, the turbines, and the cavern, to the site itself. So, that’s kind of the nuance.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Thank you. Mr. Vaccaro?

COMMISSIONER VACCARO: This is really helpful, I think, what both applicant and staff have said. I think my concern right now is because we didn’t notice this as a hearing, I just sort of feel like the more questions I might wish to ask, the further we go down the path of something that we didn’t notice for today. So, I think I’m gonna keep my questions and comments and talk with you about my thoughts in closed session.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Um — uh, did — let’s see. I guess, I would just ask the applicant if you had any — anything to add, having heard what staff said?

MR. HARRIS: Um, no, we appreciate the fact that this language is — it is a sentence, and it’s not directly — the word “compressed air” doesn’t appear in the statute. That’s the basic problem, I think, fundamentally, which requires us then to take a look at the statutory language and figure out why it is there, and then — it’s not there for geothermal, cause there’s a separate process for that. You know, the view we put into our papers is basically that it requires suitable geological formations. And whether that — you know
whether those conditions exist is really the critical issue for us. So, I’ll — I’ll stop there.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Great, well so I look forward to digging into these issues, and I guess that pun is intended. And we’ll pass back to Ralph, to see if there are any public comments.

MR. LEE: Yeah, thank you.

MR. BABULA: Can I just jump in really quick. The two things that we’d be happy to file additional information if, or whatever the committee directs us to do, and I would just point out that we have done some legislative history analysis so we would be able to provide that as well in any filing. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: Great. Thank you, Mr. Babula.

(Pause)

MR. LEE: So that concludes our discussion with the parties. So, we’ll now move to public comments. I would like to start by inviting any representatives from public agencies or tribal governments, and we didn’t hear any, so I’m not expecting any.

(Pause)

And, at the conclusion of any comments by any agency or tribal government, we’ll move on to everyone else. We have a representative from the Public
Advisor’s office here today. Ms. Avalos, are you available to assist with public comments today?

MS. AVALOS: Yes.

MR. LEE: Ok, please go ahead.

MS. AVALOS: This is a period for any person wishing to comment. Each person has up to three minutes to comment, and comments are limited to one representative per organization. Public agency or tribal governments are not restricted to three minutes. We may reduce the time to comment depending on the time to commentors. Use the raise-hand icon to indicate your interest in making public comment. If you are on the phone, press star-nine to raise your hand and star-six to unmute, and we will promote you to panelist, and you’re welcome to turn on your video box, or leave it off.

After you are called on, please restate and spell your first and last name. And please, do not use the speakerphone when talking, because we won’t be able to hear you clearly. Now, anyone wishing to make a public comment, please raise the hand icon on Zoom, and we’ll call on you if you wish to make a public comment. I’m gonna give it a little bit of time for people to decide if they want to make a public comment.

(Pause)

Okay, I have one person, actually a few. I’m
going to go ahead and call on ACO5230. You may need to unmute on your end. To make your comment, you may need to unmute on your end.

MR. BUCIS: Can you hear me?

MS. AVALOS: Yes.

MR. BUCIS: Yeah, this is Mark Bucis. Last name is spelled B-U-C-I-S. I’m a homeowner in the area. And I just wanted to recommend that these suitable geological formations that you’re talking about, I’m sure, can be found in many other places along the coastline. It doesn’t just have to be right underneath the historic Hollister Peak. And the um — could be broadened to play Diabolo Canyon being decommissioned, it could go into that area, or they could partner in with the Morro Bay Battery Storage system. I think that would be a much better alternative.

And, how can it be that just this site is available? Seems like there was some kind of a behind the scenes deal made with the landowner or something that nobody was aware of. But, uh, I just don’t think that this system is going to be beneficial for the area. As to the decimation of all the agricultural land, the native land that’s there, the tourism in the area, I just think it’s a bad idea.

MR. LEE: Yeah, thank you, this is Hearing
Officer Ralph Lee. And I just want to clarify, was that comment directed at the Gem proceeding, or the Pecho proceeding?

(Pause)

MS. AVALOS: Mr. Bucis, are you still on the line?

MR. BUCIS: Yes, that is related to the Pecho plant that is going in Morro Bay there.

MR. LEE: Okay, thank you.

(Pause)

MS. AVALOS: Okay, we have another commentator, Christopher VerPlanck. Go ahead and make your comment, and you may need to unmute on your end.

MR. VERPLANCK: Thank you, yes. My name is Christopher VerPlanck. My last name is spelled V-E-R-P-L-A-N-C-K. Um, and I live in San Francisco, but my family has property in the Chorro Valley. Um, I just wanted to say that Hollister Peak and the Chorro Valley is probably one of the most beautiful parts of San Luis Obispo County, which contains many beautiful areas.

Hollister Peak is a hugely recognizable landmark. It’s also some of the richest agricultural soil in the county. And there’s also a wealth of Chumash sites within the Chorro Valley. I’m very concerned — I like the idea of this kind of power
generation plant in general, but I’m very concerned about its location, right there in front of Hollister Peak on prime agricultural land with a potential for Chumash archaeological sites in this area.

That’s all I want to say, thank you.

MS. AVALOS: Thank you for your comment. Are there any other commentors, and a reminder to those that are on the phone, you can hit star-nine to raise your hand.

Okay, we have one more commenter, Linda Mahnken. You may go ahead and speak.

MS. MAHNKEN: Hi. My name is Linda Mahnken. It’s M-A-H-N-K-E-N. I’m a landowner adjacent to the proposed Pecho site, and as Mr. VerPlanck said, I think the technology of this is fascinating, but I think it would be wonderful for someplace like Rosamond, out in the middle of the desert. Not on, as Jared, the gentleman earlier said, this is a unique site. It’s, the uniqueness of this site is, it’s amazing. But it’s beautiful on a scenic highway, and a protected area.

And the group of landowners in this area are totally against this because, it will just ruin the, I don’t know if ambience is the right word, but the loveliness of this whole area of the Chorro Valley, and Hollister Peak area. And I just wanted you to know that the landowners in this area are very upset about it, as are
a lot of residents who have written into the tribune and
have supported our feelings about this.

Thank you.

MS. AVALOS: Thank you for your comment. Again,
are, remember to use the raised hand icon on Zoom. Are
there any commentors, I’ll give a few more seconds.

(Pause)

Okay, we have a commentor. Charlene Bucis, you
may go ahead and make your comment.

You may need to unmute on your end. Charlene?

MS. BUCIS: My name is Charline Bucis, B-U-C-I-
S. I’m a landowner about half a mile from the proposed
site. My vision now is just land, not a 100-foot tall
by 1,000 foot building, and turbines with — I can’t
imagine the sound, um, of four giant turbines one mile,
less than one mile away from my home.

My family is the Canet family who had the
original San Bernardo land grant, which included 4,400
acres, one league, in 1840, signed by Abraham Lincoln.
And that land grant is mostly sold off, but we still
have land here. I still live here. We still take care
of the Canet family cemetery, which is at the base of
Hollister Peak.

It is — it is so important to keep it rural.

To keep it beautiful, to keep it country, not turn it
into an industrial area right in front of my home. How would any of you feel to have the industrial area in front of your home, that is your vision from your front yard. I’ve tried to build on this land for 30 years. Coastal Commission told me no, even though the property was ours.

Now I’ve finally got — bought back property, my families’ property, and now you want to put a thousand-foot building in front of it? I can’t even believe it. So please, please put it somewhere else. We’ve got so much land that isn’t in this beautiful valley with Hollister Peak and Highway 1 attached. Thank you.

MS. AVALOS: Thank you for your comment. The next commentor is Richard Aris. Go ahead, you may comment. You may need to unmute on your end. Richard?

(Pause)

Go ahead, Richard.

(Pause)

Again, you may need to unmute on your end, Richard.

(Pause)

Looks like he’s having a little bit of trouble being able to comment. Just a reminder to those on Zoom, if you wanted to make a comment, go ahead and raise your hand. And going back to Richard, um, you can
make public comment through the docket as well for Gem
for Pecho, or you may contact the Public Advisor’s
office to assist you with making public comment.

It looks like Richard is unable to, to speak at
this time. And, I don’t see any other hands raised, so
I’ll turn it back to Hearing Officer Lee.

MR. LEE: Yes, thank you. And I will say,
contact information, if you want to make a comment
through the docket, is listed in the Notice of today’s
Joint Committee Conference.

And with that, that concludes the public comment
period of today’s meeting. The Committee will now
adjourn to closed session in accordance to California
Government Code Section 11126 Subdivision C3 and a —
which allows a state body to hold a closed session to
deliberate on a decision to be reached in a proceeding
the state body was required by law to conduct.
Afterward we’ll return to conclude this meeting.
(Whereupon the Conference adjourned to closed
session at 2:50 p.m.)
(Conference resumed public session at 4:55 p.m.)

COMMISSIONER MCALLISTER: We’re back, the
Committee is done with closed session. Um — and um —
as of 4:55 p.m., there is no reportable action that’s
come out of the closed session, and therefore the
meeting is now adjourned.

(Thereupon, the Conference was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.)

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I do hereby certify that the testimony in the foregoing hearing was taken at the time and place therein stated; that the testimony of said witnesses were reported by me, a certified electronic court reporter and a disinterested person, and was under my
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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 4th day of May, 2022.

PETER PETTY
CER**D-493
Notary Public

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_________________
Myra Severtson
Certified Transcriber
AAERT No. CET**D-852