

DOCKETED

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San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture, Weights & Measures Comments - on Pecho Energy Storage Center

Dear Ms Worrall:

The County of San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture has certain concerns over the proposed Pecho Energy Storage Project (PESP), proposed for the Chorro Valley near Morro Bay in San Luis Obispo County. As mentioned, the proposed project is located in the Chorro Valley which is recognized for its thriving agriculture and scenic views. The project sits almost entirely on important agricultural soils ranging from Class I-IV that are classified as prime farmland if irrigated, and if irrigated and drained. The project raises concerns relative to future agriculture production on this site as the configuration is proposed for the benefit of energy storage and proximity to a substation rather than crop production. The Department recognizes the importance of developing battery energy storage systems to meet the requirements of SB 100 but is concerned about the long-term impacts to on and offsite agricultural resources and operations. If constructed, the PESP would remove approximately 880,000 cubic yards of rock/soil that would be stockpiled on the project site temporarily or permanently, effectively removing the agricultural viability of the site. As mentioned in the comment letter from Jackie Crabb, District Manager of the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District dated June 6, 2022, submitted in response to this proposal, the cubic yardage to be stockpiled is enough to cover 545 acres of land one foot deep in the excavated material or to cover 110 acres of land five feet deep.

The location and nature of the proposal for the PESP are inconsistent with the policies in the San Luis Obispo County Agriculture Element, Conservation and Open Space Element, the Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance, Local Coastal Program, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and on current departmental policy to conserve agricultural resources and to provide for public health, safety, and welfare while mitigating to the extent feasible the negative impacts of development to agriculture. Further analysis of more compatible sites should be considered by the project applicant to meet their project objectives. Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Ian Landreth, Agriculture Resource Specialist
Department of Agriculture \ Weights & Measures
County of San Luis Obispo