

<b>DOCKETED</b>	
<b>Docket Number:</b>	23-OPT-02
<b>Project Title:</b>	Darden Clean Energy Project
<b>TN #:</b>	261723
<b>Document Title:</b>	Report of Conversation with US Fish and Wildlife Service Re Migratory Bird Presence and Approach at the Proposed Project Site
<b>Description:</b>	N/A
<b>Filer:</b>	Lisa Worrall
<b>Organization:</b>	California Energy Commission
<b>Submitter Role:</b>	Commission Staff
<b>Submission Date:</b>	2/12/2025 12:46:06 PM
<b>Docketed Date:</b>	2/12/2025



*Siting, Transmission and Environmental Protection Division*

**FILE: N/A**

**PROJECT TITLE: DCEP**

**Docket: 23-OPT-02**

**TECHNICAL AREA(s): Biological Resources**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Telephone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting Location:	
<b>NAME(s):</b>	Carol Watson, Biologist	<b>DATE:</b>	Various 11/2024 to 2/2025
<b>WITH:</b>	Thomas Dietsch, USFWS Migratory Bird Permit Office (MBPO)		
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Migratory Bird Presence and Approach at the Proposed Project Site		

**COMMENTS:**

Between November 2024 and February 2025, U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) biologist Thomas Dietsch and CEC staff biologists Carol Watson, Andrea Stroud, and Ann Crisp have met both telephonically and virtually via Teams to transmit information pertaining to the project description, surveys and mapping results, and applicant’s project files; discuss potential impacts; and work collaboratively to identify potential mitigation.

Specifically, the USFWS identified that given the scale of the Darden Clean Energy Project, the project has the potential to adversely impact migratory birds in the region, due in part to it being the largest solar photovoltaic (PV) facility on the landscape. Therefore, USFWS MBPO staff recommended that the project prepare and implement a Bird and Bat Conservation Strategy (BBCS) with an adaptive management framework, based on 2 years of mortality monitoring. USFWS further recommend that:

1. The BBCS should include a Nesting Bird Management Plan to avoid impacts to nesting birds;
2. Nesting Swainson’s hawk could be banded or tracked to determine if they are foraging in the solar PV facility after construction. This might be helpful in assessing impacts of future projects on Swainson’s hawk; and
3. Vegetation below the panels should not be bladed or graded to maintain the prey base for the hawks, with revegetation to potentially include alfalfa as that seems to be a preferred foraging substrate for Swainson's hawk (grassy vegetation also typically contains prey for the hawks).

USFWS MBPO staff have subsequently reviewed a first draft of staff’s proposed Condition of Certification that would require the project owner to develop and implement a monitoring strategy.

# CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION



REPORT OF CONVERSATION

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CEC staff will continue to coordinate with USFWS staff regarding migratory birds and recommended measures.

<b>CC:</b>	<b>Signed:</b> _____ s _____ <b>Name:</b> Carol Watson
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