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*Comment Received From: Mariana Alvarenga
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**Public Comments March 26th, 2025 Darden Clean Energy Project
Public Meeting**

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



April 21, 2025

RE: March 26th, 2025 Darden Clean Energy Project Public Meeting

Dear Chair Hochschild, Vice Chair Gunda, Commissioner Gallardo, Commissioner McAllister, and Commissioner Skinner:

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (LCJA), Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN), and Five Points, Cantua Creek, and El Porvenir residents attended the Darden Clean Energy Project Public Meeting hosted by the California Energy Commission (CEC) on March 26th, 2025. This letter aims to uplift community concerns and priorities shared during the hearing, along with additional context and priorities around these. This letter is sent in conjunction with more comprehensive comments on the Staff Assessment and Draft Environmental Impact Report.

Five Points, Cantua Creek, and El Porvenir residents expressed their frustrations in feeling forgotten and excluded throughout the community benefits agreement process. Residents asked Intercept Power to establish a community benefits agreement directly with these three communities¹ that addresses the communities' needs and priorities. Comunidades de Westside noted that they will live near the project and will directly feel the environmental impacts of the project. Furthermore, the project is being proposed near their community, yet residents will not receive any direct benefits from the clean energy technology being constructed and overseen by Intersect Power. Residents themselves historically have lacked access to this type of energy or technology, such as rooftop solar, to power their homes and neighborhoods. Thus, the benefits and electricity need to come directly to these three communities.

At the CEC public meeting, Cantua Creek residents expressed the necessity to have a physical space that serves as a community resilience center to provide heating and cooling for residents. This space will also allow the community to continue to host community events and monthly food distributions. Additionally, residents shared the need to have a fire station in their community to address fire-related issues promptly.

Five Points residents commented that the community would like to stay informed about everything associated with the project and do not want organizations to speak on behalf of Five

¹Residents formed the group Comunidades de Westside in April 2025

Points and receive economic support in the name of their community. A resident emphasized the importance of funds to come directly to their community. Another community member shared similar sentiments and worries in wanting her community to be heard. If the project is approved, she shared that the main priority for the community benefits agreement should be providing help for homes that are falling apart, minimizing dust, providing air conditioning, and maintaining the conditions of the surrounding streets. As an agricultural worker who often works under extreme heat, she comes back to a home that is also hot and does not have air conditioning. Like the former resident, she emphasized the need for funding to go directly to the community and to fix issues that impact their quality of living.

LCJA urged the commission to answer residents' questions ahead of a revised staff assessment to provide an opportunity for residents to incorporate responses into their comments on the project. We asked the CEC to center community priorities and incorporate them into the Darden Clean Energy Project. We acknowledge the CEC's commitment to addressing adverse impacts for clean energy projects by including a requirement for community benefit agreements in the Opt-In Certification Process under Assembly Bill 205. However, because this is the first project to have a complete application and get so far in this process, it must set an example of ensuring that communities directly receive any benefits associated with these projects based on their community priorities.

LCJA and CCEJN agree that the CEC needs to ensure the communities closest to projects receive meaningful and direct community benefits. The residents we work alongside have identified the above specific priorities for a potential community benefits agreement and we are in communication with the developer about these priorities. The community benefits plan must be amended to include the priorities of Comunidades de Westside.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to continuing conversations on this matter. For any questions, please reach out to Mariana Alvarenga at malvarenga@leadershipcounsel.org and Oralia Maceda at omaceda@ccejn.org.

Sincerely,

Mariana Alvarenga
Senior Policy Advocate
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Oralia Maceda
Just Transition Coordinator
Central California Environmental Justice Network

Comunidades de Westside