

DOCKETED

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Staff assessment of the Fountain Wind Project

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

To: California Energy Commission – Docket Number 23-Opt-01

Subject: Staff report for the Fountain Wind Project, Shasta County

May 18, 2025

By way of introduction, my name is Steven Kerns and I am a Certified Wildlife Biologist, owner of Wildland Resource Managers and a Shasta County Planning Commissioner for Shasta County District 3, the district where the Fountain Wind Project is proposed to be built.

As you are aware, on June 22, 2021 after months of study and review and a 10-hour public meeting with over 400 in attendance, our commission voted unanimously to deny the Fountain Wind Application. We concluded that the project would have, “detrimental impacts to aesthetics; potential increased fire danger; impediments to firefighting efforts; damage to wildlife, damage to natural resources; and damage to cultural and tribal resources.” Furthermore, we noted that the project would be “detrimental to the health, safety, peace, morals, comfort and general welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood ...” That phrase is found in the Shasta County general plan and serves as a guide for we decision makers when considering a project’s impacts to the public; simply put, how does a project impact our citizens?

In my nine years as a planning commissioner there has never been a worse project than Fountain Wind for putting our citizens and our natural resources at risk.

Recognizing these same facts our County Board of Supervisors also denied the application and passed a zoning ordinance prohibiting the issuance of a permit or approval of any large wind system in the unincorporated areas of Shasta County.

Your Staff’s “Assessment of the Fountain Wind Project” published in March of 2025 recognizes that the key reason this ordinance was passed was to protect our citizens as stated:

“11.5 Purpose of the Shasta County Ordinance SCC 2023-01

“Shasta County Code, section 17.88.335, which was amended under Ordinance SCC 2023-01, prohibits the issuance of a permit or approval of any large wind systems in unincorporated areas of Shasta County. (See Section 5.8 Land Use.) The stated purpose in the ordinance is to protect and promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the County’s citizens. The ordinance also contains findings that describe other reasons for the prohibition, including the adverse impacts of large wind energy systems with respect to wildfire, aerial firefighting, aesthetics, biological resources, and historical, cultural, and tribal resources, as well as the fact that most areas subject to this ban are in high and very high fire hazard zones as designated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

With regards to wind systems in these fire zones, the ordinance finds that large wind energy systems are incompatible in the high and very high fire hazard severity zones.

The ordinance also finds that due to the identified impacts, the construction or operation of large wind energy systems will not have an overall net positive economic benefit to Shasta County.

In sum, the ordinance can reasonably be read as a public health, safety and environmental protection law seeking to address articulated concerns and impacts related to the placing of large turbines in a mountainous forest prone to wildfires.” (Pg 11-5)

Your staff grasps the importance of how our elected officials acted to protect the citizens of our county. You must do the same by denying this project. By not doing so you clearly communicate that you do not value the lives of our citizens and the welfare of our natural resources. .

In the conclusion section of the staff report, Section 11.5, staff notes:

“In considering the public safety, general welfare and environmental purpose of Shasta County Code sections 17.88.335, 17.08.010 and the Shasta County General Plan, Scenic Highways Element, the articulate opposition by the Pit River tribe, the unmitigable significant impacts to the environment in the areas of biological resources, tribal cultural resources, visual resources, forestry resources, wildfire and land use, the minimal reliability support from the project during summer net peak times, and the financial costs to Shasta County, the potential loss of some natural working lands to sequester carbon, balanced against the contribution of the 205 MW to the SB 100 goals, and the economic benefits to the community from the project, staff recommends the CEC find the project is not necessary for public convenience and necessity and should be denied.

“This recommendation is based on substantial evidence and comes after an independent analysis of project information contained in the record, consultation with experts in the field, and independent research as described in each of the technical sections. The particular facts surrounding this project, acute impacts from intrusive turbines in a high fire zone forest setting with considerable biological resources and tribal significance, balanced against the diffuse benefits of contributing to a broader energy transition, favors a finding that the project’s contribution is not required for public convenience and necessity” (Pg 11-5).

As you are aware, this project has been exhaustively reviewed by the Shasta County Planning Commission, the Shasta County Board of Supervisors, and the California Energy Commission Staff and all have come to the same conclusion, as stated in the Staff Assessment:

“Significant and unavoidable impacts have been identified in the areas of Biological Resources, Visual Resources, Tribal Cultural Resources, Wildfire, Forestry Resources, and Land Use. As described in the analysis for these technical sections, to the extent mitigation is proposed (referred to as Condition of Certification), the mitigation would not substantially lessen the impacts to render them less than significant.” P 11-22

Based on all these facts, reviews and findings, the CEC must conclude that the Fountain Wind Project is the wrong project in the wrong place and deny the application.

Thank you.

Yours respectfully,

Steven J. Kerns