

*Comment Received From: Casey Willis  
Submitted On: 2/21/2024  
Docket Number: 23-OPT-01*

## **Support for Fountain Wind Project**

Attached is a comment letter.

*Additional submitted attachment is included below.*

February 21, 2024  
California Energy Commission  
Docket No. 23-OPT-01  
715 P Street  
Sacramento CA 95814

*Submitted via e-commenting portal*

**Re: Support for Fountain Wind Project Opt-in Application for Certification**

I am writing to express my support for the California Energy Commission's (CEC) approval of the Fountain Wind project, the first project to apply to the CEC under its AB 205 Opt-In program for eligible renewable energy projects. The project is located entirely on private timberlands in active commercial production in Shasta County and adjacent to an existing wind project that has safely operated for over a decade.

The State's *2021 SB 100 Joint Agency Report* concludes that, to meet California's clean energy targets of 90% by 2030, 95% by 2040 and 100% by 2045, the State "will need to sustain its expansion of clean electricity generation capacity at a record-breaking rate for the next 25 years. On average, the state will need to build 6 GW of new solar, wind and battery storage resources annually." Said differently, the report projects the need to build 148,000 MW of new resources by 2045. The Fountain Wind Project would when operational to serve 80,000 homes contributing to California's renewable energy initiatives. If California is to have any chance of meeting the clean energy goals it has set to address climate change and protect the environment and public health, the CEC should reject unproven claims driven by those opposed to the Project and approve the Fountain Wind and other renewable energy projects that are supported by the conclusions of a comprehensive environmental review.

The most oft-cited complaint against the Fountain Wind Project is that wind projects increase fire risk. However, expert testimony on the record shows that properly designed and maintained wind energy projects can actually decrease fire risk. A modern wind project like Fountain Wind will reduce fire risk both by creating substantial fire breaks and by creating enhanced fire-suppression access. The concern that we carry is that the fire risk issue presented by local opposition is consistent with themes played out across the United States where one particular issue is championed as a red herring position by groups that are opposed to a particular project in one breath but support the benefits of clean energy in the other. Denying well-sited renewable facilities such as Fountain Wind (which was recommended for approval by the Shasta County Planning Department after a comprehensive environmental review) based on localized political opposition would not only set a bad precedent that sends a chilling signal to capital markets



poised to invest in California's renewable future, but in doing so would also be a major step in the wrong direction for the State, and for the global climate.

Transforming California's fossil-fuel-based energy system will require the participation of every County in California. It is simply untenable for entire counties or regions to prohibit well-sited renewable energy projects that will be required to meet the state's collective demand for energy. If not a well sited location in a previously developed and disturbed area such as privately land actively used in commercial timber production, where would the CEC suggest wind projects be developed to support California's clean energy goals?

A resource portfolio that includes wind as well as solar and other resource types will significantly reduce total clean energy capacity requirements, lower overall land-use impacts and reduce supply chain and other risks – all of which will help California achieve its ambitious and laudatory clean energy goals.

I strongly urge you to approve the Fountain Wind Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Casey Willis", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Casey Willis

Vice President, Development-West Region