

DOCKETED

Docket Number:	23-OPT-02
Project Title:	Darden Clean Energy Project
TN #:	262560
Document Title:	Darden Clean Energy Project Public Meeting CEC Staff Assessment
Description:	Darden Clean Energy Project 23-OPT-02 Public Meeting CEC Staff Assessment - Meeting Slides
Filer:	Marichka Haws
Organization:	California Energy Commission
Submitter Role:	Commission Staff
Submission Date:	4/2/2025 1:23:59 PM
Docketed Date:	4/2/2025



Darden Clean Energy Project
23-OPT-02
Public Meeting
CEC Staff Assessment

March 26, 2025



Pledge of Allegiance



**I pledge allegiance to
the flag of the United
States of America, and
to the Republic for
which it stands, one
Nation under God,
indivisible, with liberty
and justice for all.**



Housekeeping Items

- Meeting is a recorded hybrid meeting.
- Zoom closed captioning service
 - Activate: click on the “live transcript” icon and then choose either “show subtitle” or “view full transcript”.
 - Stop: by exiting out of the “live transcript” or selecting the “hide subtitle” icon.
- Please be mindful of the audio for those participating online.
- Agenda includes time for public comment and input.



Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **CEC Staff Presentations**
 - Opt-In Certification Project Update
 - CEC Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs presentation - public and tribal participation opportunities
- **Introductory Remarks**
 - California Native American Tribes
 - Government Agencies
 - Elected Officials
- **Break**
- **CEC Staff Presentation**
 - Discussion of key technical topics in the Staff Assessment
 - Biological Resources
 - Battery Energy Storage Systems Safety
- **Break**
- **Interested Parties and Public Comment**
- **Next Steps**
- **Closing Comments**
- **Adjourn Meeting**



Welcome





CEC Staff Presentations





Project Overview

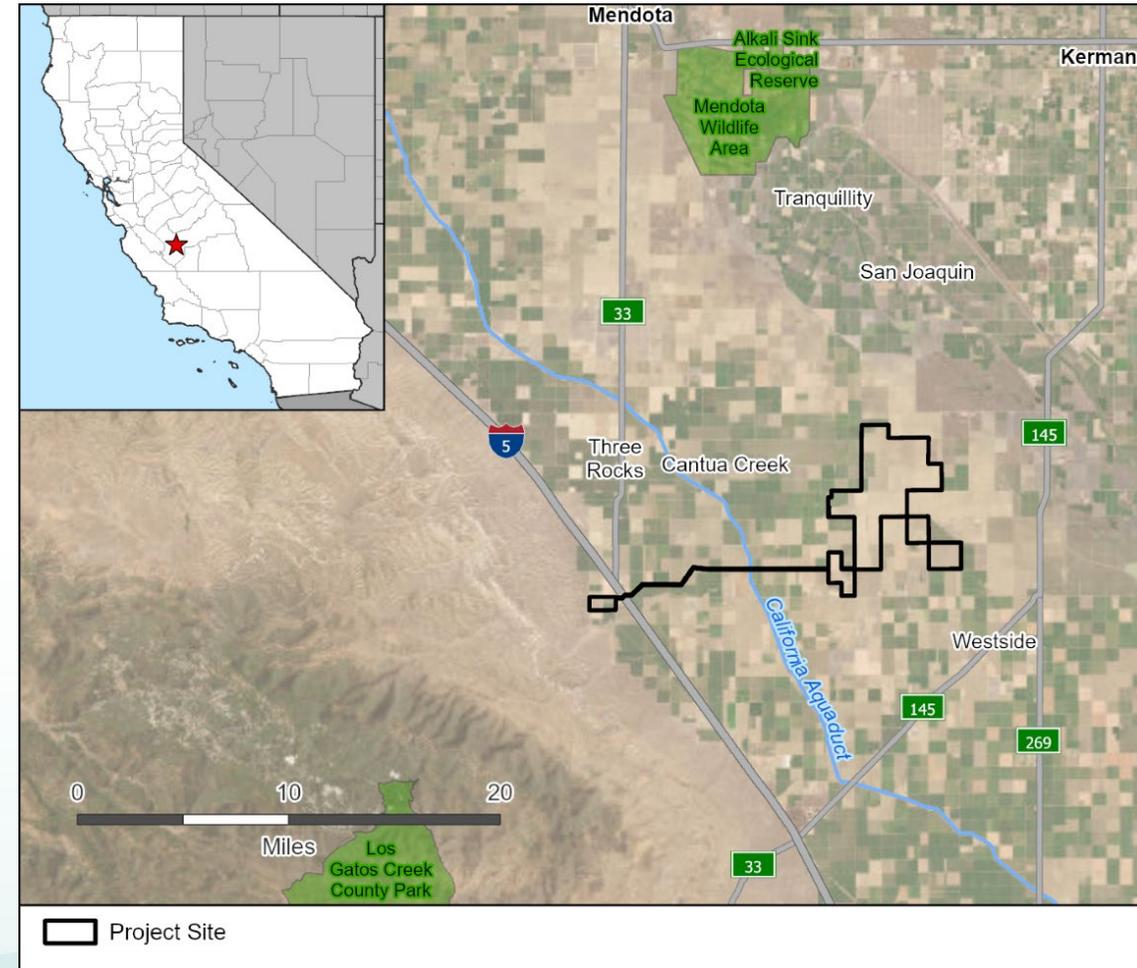
Presented by Kaycee Chang
Supervisor, CEQA Siting Project Management Unit





Darden Clean Energy Project Overview

- Unincorporated Fresno County
- Approximately 9,500 acres
- Construction and operation of:
 - 1,150 MW photovoltaic facility
 - Up to 4,600 MWh battery energy storage system (BESS)
 - Substation
 - Generation-intertie line
 - Utility Switchyard



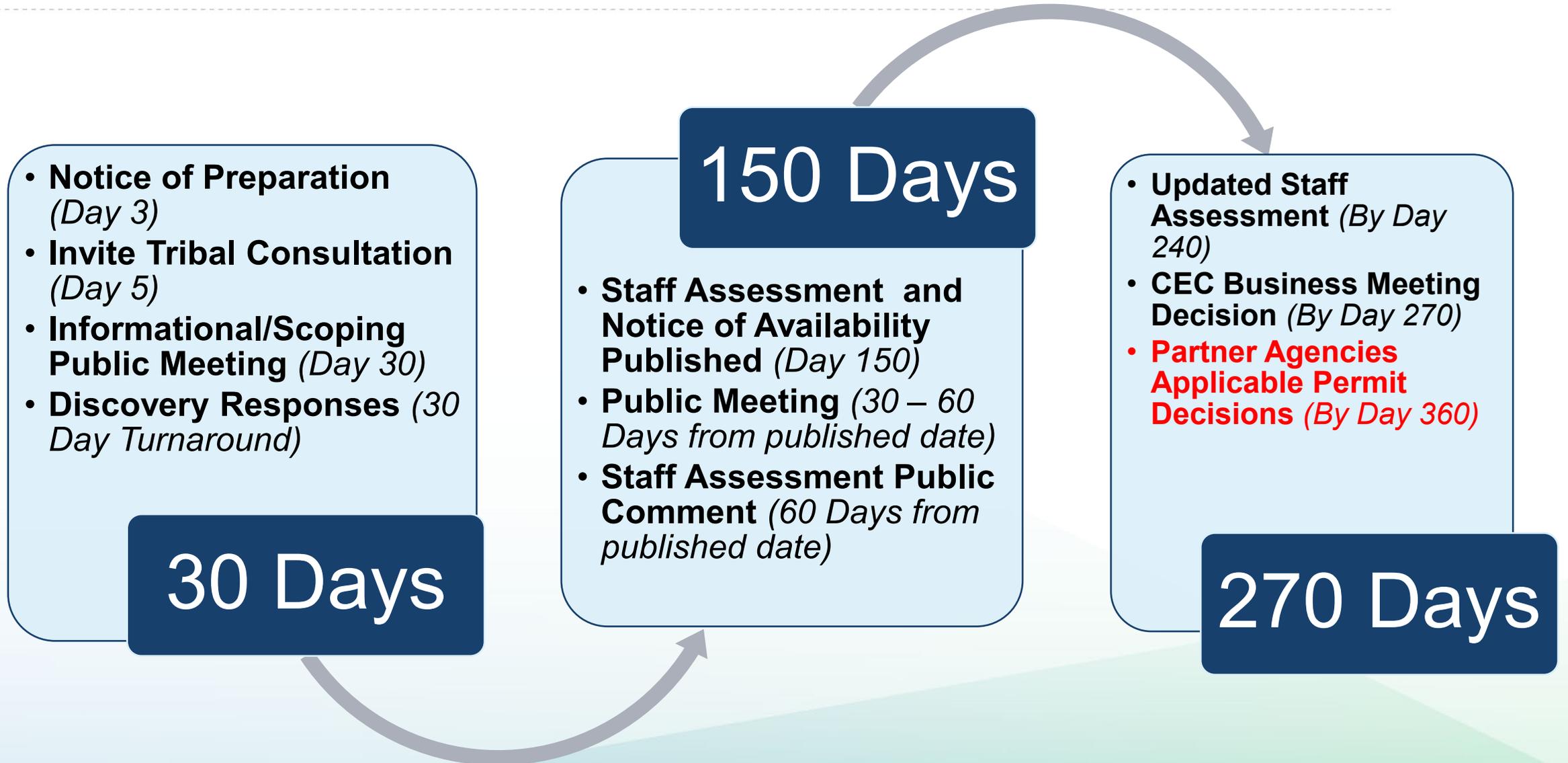


Opt-In Findings

1. Meet Opt-In Mandatory Project Requirements.
 - Prevailing Wage Agreement
 - Community Benefits Agreement
 - Net Economic Benefit to Local Government
2. Conform with Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, Standards (LORS)
3. Draft CEQA Environmental Impact Report with Proposed Applicable Mitigation Measures to Insignificant Impacts



Opt-In Certification Process



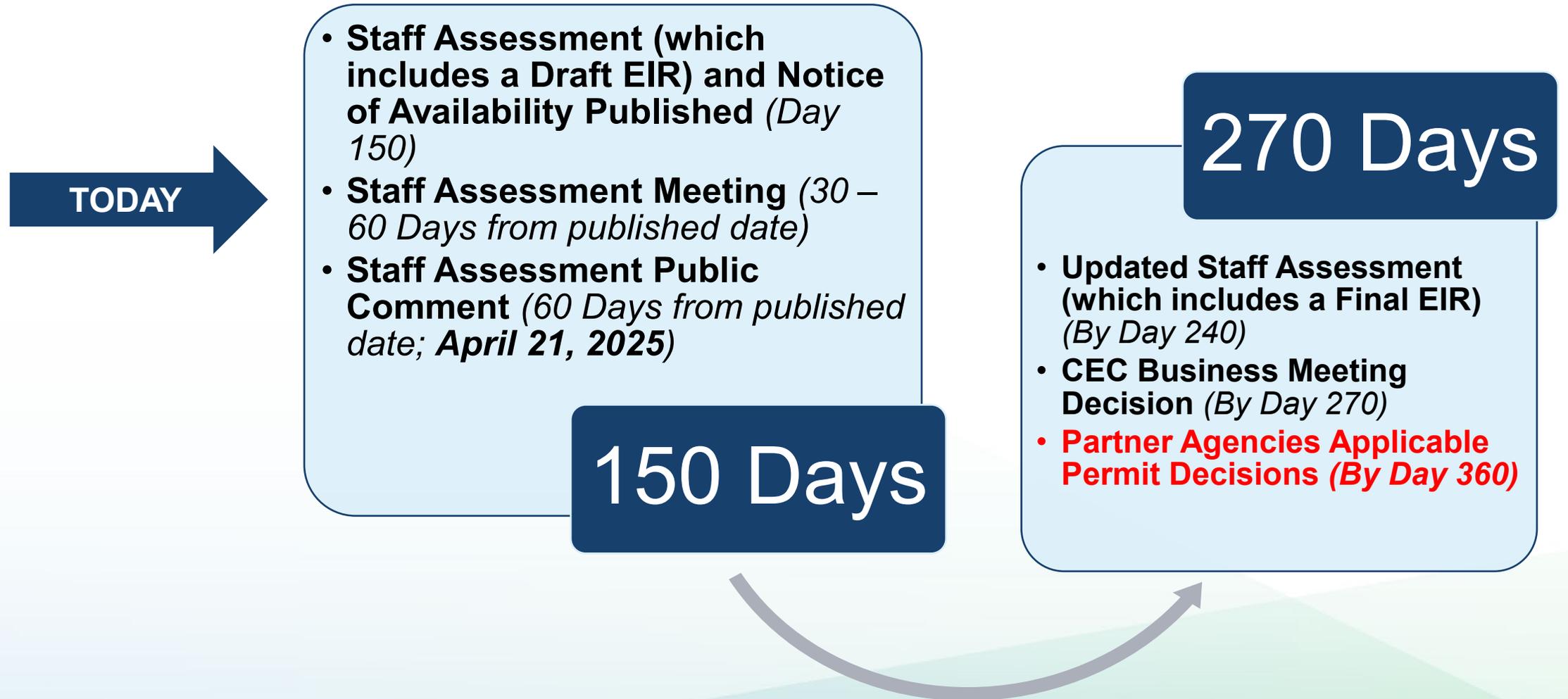


Project Status

- 11/9/2023 - Opt-in application received
- 9/19/2024 - Determination of Complete Application for the Darden Clean Energy Project (23-OPT-02)
- 10/16/2024 - Environmental Scoping and Informational Meeting held in Fresno County and online
- 2/18/2025 - Darden Clean Energy Project Staff Assessment (including Draft EIR) released
 - **Comment period closes at 5pm on April 21, 2025**



Project Next Steps





Project Website



Darden Clean Energy Project

PROJECT OWNER

IP Darden I, LLC

DOCKET NUMBER

23-OPT-02

LOCATION

Fresno County

TECHNOLOGY

Solar Photovoltaic (PV)

PROJECT STATUS

Under Review

PROJECT TYPE

Opt-in

ORIGINAL PROCEEDING

[Submit e-Comment](#)

[Submit e-Filing](#)

[Docket Log \(23-OPT-02\)](#)

[Exhibit List](#)

[Proof of Service List](#)

[Search All Power Plant Documents](#)

<https://www.energy.ca.gov/power-plant/solar-photovoltaic-pv/darden-clean-energy-project>

Project Description

December 13, 2024 UPDATE: The Option 2 location for the step-up substation, battery energy storage system, and O&M facility is no longer part of the project.

October 3, 2024 UPDATE: The 800-megawatt green hydrogen facility is no longer part of the project.

IP Darden I, LLC and Affiliates (Applicant) propose to construct and operate the Darden Clean Energy Project on approximately 9,500 acres in western Fresno County. The project consists of a 1,150 megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) facility, an up to 4,600 megawatt-hour battery energy storage system (BESS), a 34.5-500 kilovolt (kV) grid step-up substation, a 15-mile 500 kV generation intertie (gen-tie) line, and a 500 kV utility

CONTACTS**PROJECT MANAGER**

Lisa Worrall
STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov

(Please enter project name in the email subject line)



Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs

**Presented by Armand Angulo
Equity and Public Participation Manager**



Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity and Tribal Affairs

Advise and support the California Energy Commission, stakeholders, California Native American tribes, and interested public members in meaningful engagement and participation in California Energy Commission programs, policies, and energy equity efforts.





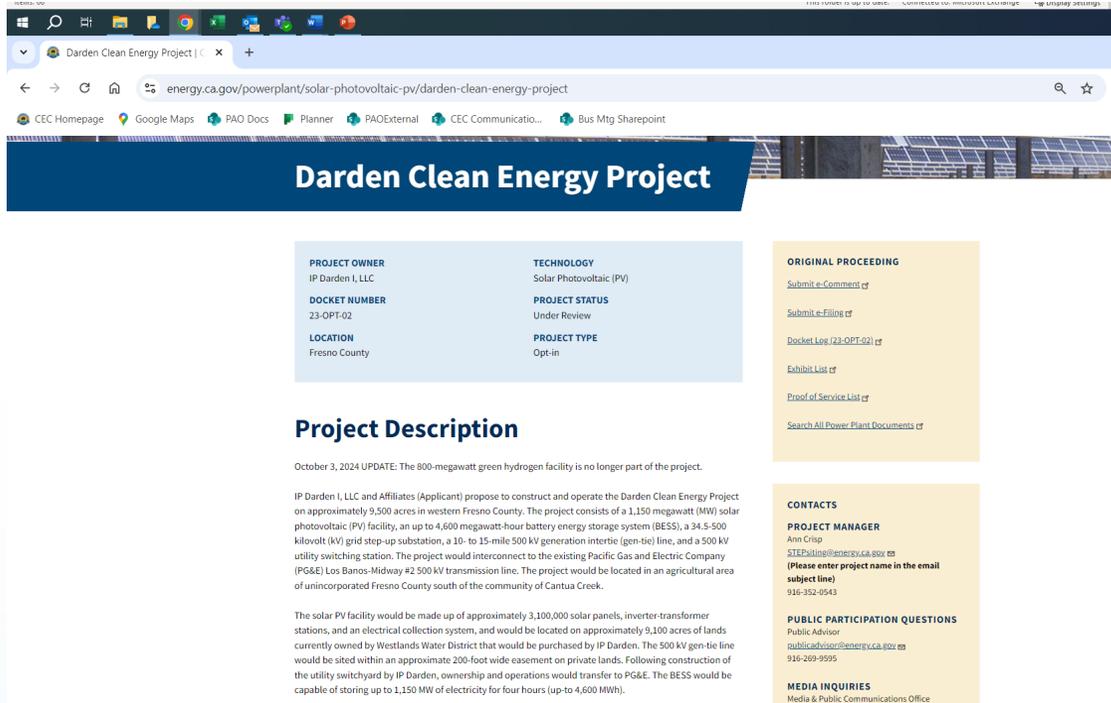
Multiple Ways to Participate

1. Follow
2. Comment
3. Tribal Consultation





Follow Via Web, Email and Events



Darden Clean Energy Project

PROJECT OWNER IP Darden I, LLC	TECHNOLOGY Solar Photovoltaic (PV)	ORIGINAL PROCEEDING Submit e-Comment
DOCKET NUMBER 23-0PT-02	PROJECT STATUS Under Review	Submit e-Filing
LOCATION Fresno County	PROJECT TYPE Opt-in	Docket Log (23-0PT-02)
		Exhibit List
		Proof of Service List
		Search All Power Plant Documents

Project Description

October 3, 2024 UPDATE: The 800-megawatt green hydrogen facility is no longer part of the project.

IP Darden I, LLC and Affiliates (Applicant) propose to construct and operate the Darden Clean Energy Project on approximately 9,500 acres in western Fresno County. The project consists of a 1,150 megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) facility, an up to 4,600 megawatt-hour battery energy storage system (BESS), a 34.5-500 kilovolt (kV) grid step-up substation, a 10- to 15-mile 500 kV generation intertie (gen-tie) line, and a 500 kV utility switching station. The project would interconnect to the existing Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) Los Banos-Midway #2 500 kV transmission line. The project would be located in an agricultural area of unincorporated Fresno County south of the community of Cantua Creek.

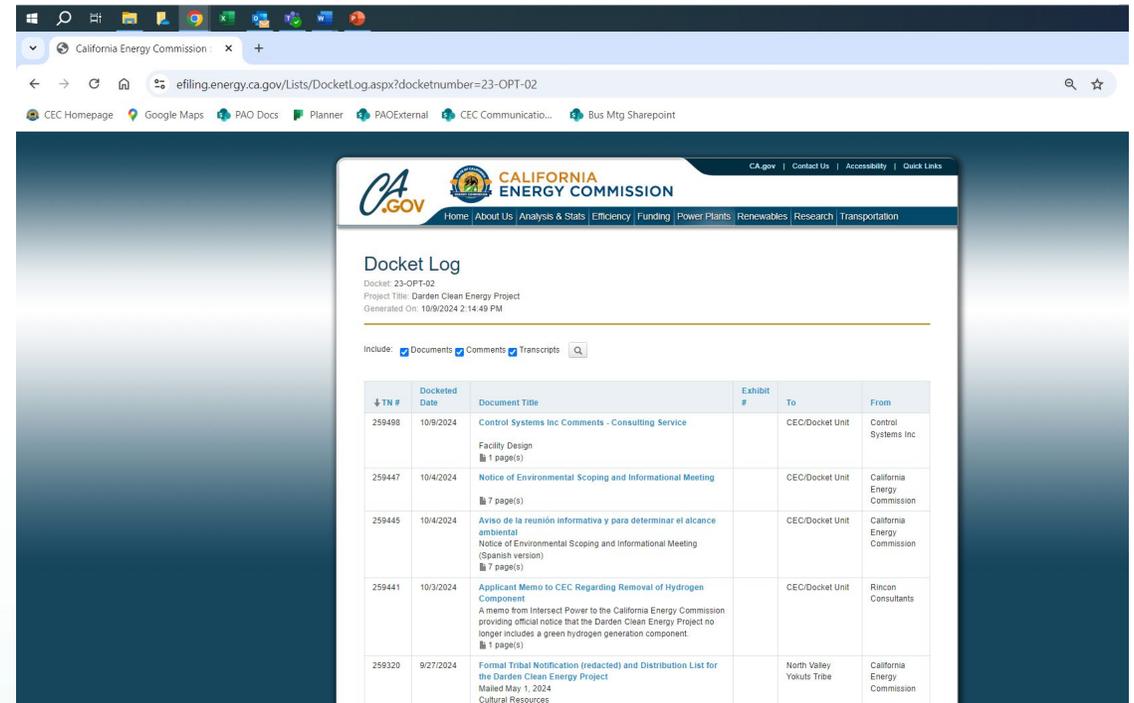
The solar PV facility would be made up of approximately 3,100,000 solar panels, inverter-transformer stations, and an electrical collection system, and would be located on approximately 9,100 acres of lands currently owned by Westlands Water District that would be purchased by IP Darden. The 500 kV gen-tie line would be sited within an approximate 200-foot wide easement on private lands. Following construction of the utility switchyard by IP Darden, ownership and operations would transfer to PG&E. The BESS would be capable of storing up to 1,150 MW of electricity for four hours (up to 4,600 MWh).

CONTACTS

PROJECT MANAGER
Ann Crisp
31723101@energy.ca.gov
(Please enter project name in the email subject line)
916-352-0543

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS
Public Advisor
publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov
916-269-9595

MEDIA INQUIRIES
Media & Public Communications Office



California Energy Commission

Docket Log
Docket: 23-0PT-02
Project Title: Darden Clean Energy Project
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Include: Documents Comments Transcripts

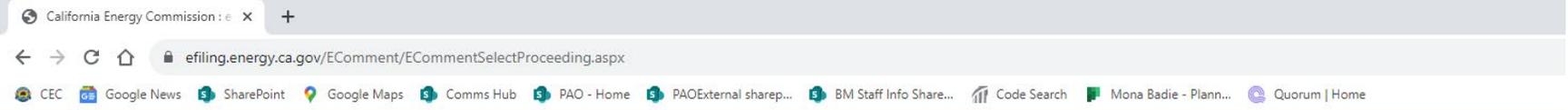
↓ TN #	Docketed Date	Document Title	Exhibit #	To	From
259498	10/9/2024	Control Systems Inc Comments - Consulting Service Facility Design 1 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	Control Systems Inc
259447	10/4/2024	Notice of Environmental Scoping and Informational Meeting 7 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	California Energy Commission
259445	10/4/2024	Aviso de la reunión informativa y para determinar el alcance ambiental Notice of Environmental Scoping and Informational Meeting (Spanish version) 7 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	California Energy Commission
259441	10/3/2024	Applicant Memo to CEC Regarding Removal of Hydrogen Component A memo from Intersect Power to the California Energy Commission providing official notice that the Darden Clean Energy Project no longer includes a green hydrogen generation component. 1 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	Rincon Consultants
259320	9/27/2024	Formal Tribal Notification (redacted) and Distribution List for the Darden Clean Energy Project Mailed May 1, 2024 Cultural Resources		North Valley Yokuts Tribe	California Energy Commission

Visit CEC project webpage for links to comment, sign up for email updates, access project docket, project information, and more:
<https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/solar-photovoltaic-pv/darden-clean-energy-project>

Visit Docket 23-0PT-02 for free 24/7 access to project documents:
<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=23-0PT-02>



Verbal and Written Comments



<https://www.energy.ca.gov/events>

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Add Comment

Fields denoted by an asterisk (*) are required.

Select a Proceeding * or [View All Projects](#)

You will need to select a proceeding before continuing

For any questions regarding e-commenting, please send an e-mail to e-CommentingHelp@energy.ca.gov or call 800-822-6228 or 916-654-4489.

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<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/EComment/ECommentSelectProceeding.aspx>



Tribal Consultation

- The California Energy Commission has invited consultation with California Native American tribes.
- Contact: Gabriel Roark, Assistant Tribal Liaison
Gabriel.Roark@energy.ca.gov (916) 237-2544.



Thank you!

Contact Information

Email Address

publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov

Phone Number

(916) 269-9595

Online Web Address

<https://www.energy.ca.gov/about/divisions-and-offices/office-public-advisor>



Introductory Remarks

- California Native American Tribes
- Government Agencies
- Elected Officials



Break

Please return at





Project Staff Assessment Overview

Presented by Lisa Worrall, Project Manager





Environmental and Engineering Technical Areas

Environmental Technical Area	Environmental Technical Area	Engineering Technical Area
Air Quality	Public Health	Efficiency and Energy Resources
Biological Resources	Socioeconomics	Facility Design
Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Solid Waste Management	Facility Reliability
Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources	Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance	Transmission System Engineering
Geology, Paleontology, and Minerals	Transportation	Worker Safety and Fire Protection
Hazards, Hazardous Materials/Waste, and Wildfire	Visual Resources	
Land Use and Agriculture	Water Resources	
Noise and Vibration	Public Benefits	
	Environmental Justice	



Technical Areas of Interest

- Biological Resources
- Hazards, Hazardous Materials/Waste, and Wildfire
- Worker Safety and Fire Protection



Biological Resources

Presented by Carol Watson, Project Biologist





Biological Resources

Regulatory Compliance

Project complies with all environmental laws, ordinances regulations and standards (LORS), including:

- Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA)
- California Endangered Species Act (CESA)
- California Fish and Game Code
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
- Fresno County General Plan

Key Environmental Considerations

- **Primary impact:** Loss of agricultural foraging habitat for wildlife
- No rare plants, natural vegetation communities, or wetlands/riparian areas occur on site
- Mitigation is comprehensive and incorporates measures to protect common and special-status wildlife and plants



Biological Resources

Conditions of Certification (Mitigation Measures)

- 17 site-specific, agency-reviewed measures
- Reduce impacts to less than significant
- Comply with LORS
- Implemented by project owner and enforced by CEC through life of the project

Wildlife Protection & Mitigation

- AB 205 & CEC in-lieu permitting authority
- California Endangered Species Act (CESA): Regulations on species "take" under CDFG Code Section 2081(b)
 - ❑ Burrowing Owl Legal Status: State Candidate for Listing; Species of Special Concern
 - ❑ Swainson's Hawk Legal Status: State-listed as Threatened



Biological Resources

Burrowing Owl

- **Potential Impact:** Nest destruction, mortality, or displacement, if present during construction
- **Mitigation:**
 - Pre-construction surveys
 - Avoidance buffer zones
 - Management plans, including to address potential passive relocation
- Onsite revegetation
- Offsite purchase of 200 acres of habitat compensation

Swainson's Hawk

- **Potential Impact:** Foraging habitat loss from conversion to solar arrays
- **Mitigation:**
 - Pre-construction surveys
 - Avoidance buffer zones
 - Management plans
- Onsite revegetation, artificial nesting structures, and tree conservation easement
- Offsite habitat conservation or compensation may be required



Biological Resources

Other Biological Resources:

- Burrowing owl & Swainson's hawk measures are beneficial to other species including pollinators
- Nesting birds & tricolored blackbird (MBTA, CESA, and Fish and Game Code)
- American badger; San Joaquin kit fox; and Crotch's bumble bee
- Avian Solar Conservation Plan



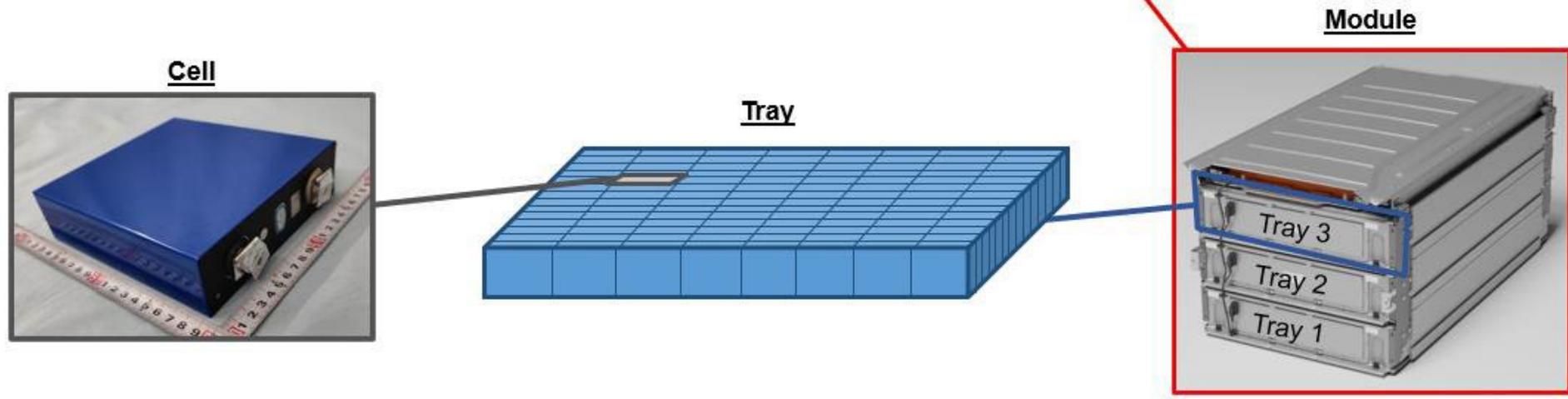
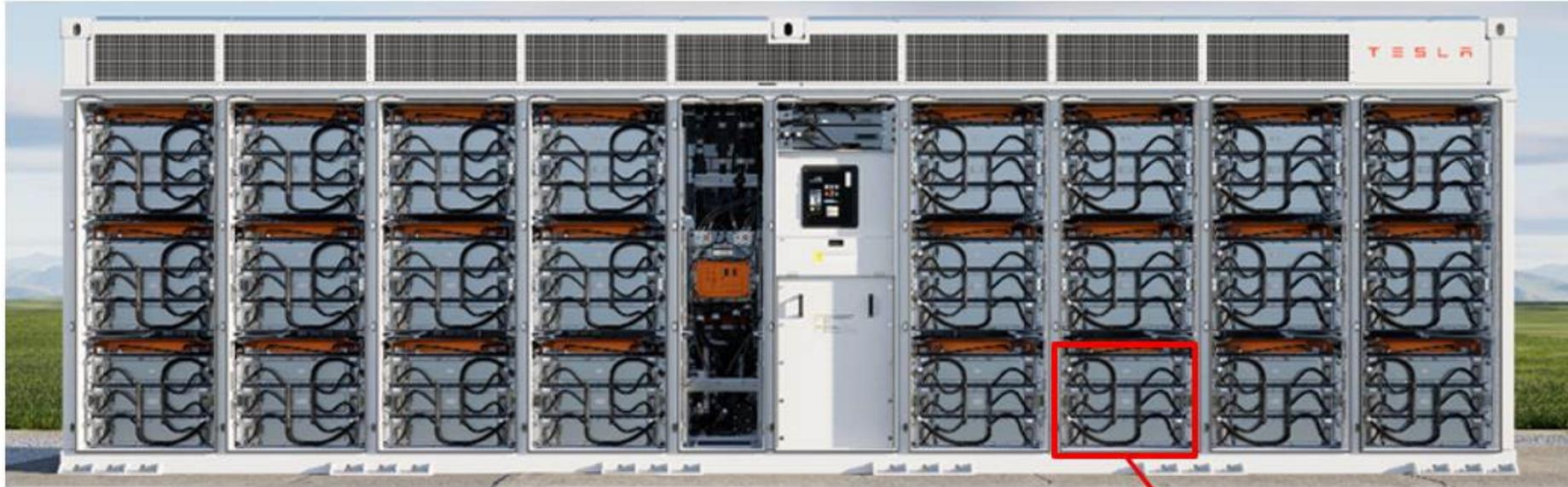
Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Safety

- **Hazards, Hazardous Materials/Waste, and Wildfire**
- **Worker Safety and Fire Protection**

Presented by Brett Fooks, Safety and Reliability Branch Manager



Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Container





BESS Codes and Standards

Compliance with the following codes and standards:

- California Fire Code (Chapter 12)
- National Fire Protection Association (855)
- UL Solutions (9540 & 9540A)
- California Public Utilities Commission (General Order 167-C)





Engineering & Administrative Controls

- **Engineering Controls**

- Internal “sparkers”
- Deflagration panels

- **Administrative Controls**

- Ship lithium-ion batteries with limited State of Charge (SOC)
- Emergency response plans



Incident Response Mitigation

- Establish a Command & Control Protocol
- Dedicated command & control center
- Thermal infrared cameras
- Provide fire water onsite
- Real time air monitoring



Fire Department Collaboration

- Fresno County Fire Protection District (FCFPD) reviews and comments on BESS design
- Establish an annual joint training program with the FCFPD
- FCFPD review and comment on Emergency Response Plans
- FCFPD funding to offset impacts





Break

Please return at





Public Comment

Instruction

- 3 minutes or less per person
- 1 representative per organization

Zoom App/Online

- Click “raise hand”

Telephone

- Press *9 to raise hand
- Press *6 to mute and unmute

When called upon

- CEC staff will open your line
- Unmute, spell name and state affiliation, if any

3-MINUTE TIMER





Thank You

**Staff Assessment (includes Draft EIR) Public Comment Period
closes on April 21, 2025, by 5:00 p.m.**

Lisa Worrall, Project Manager

Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division

STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov