

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

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- 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

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- **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**



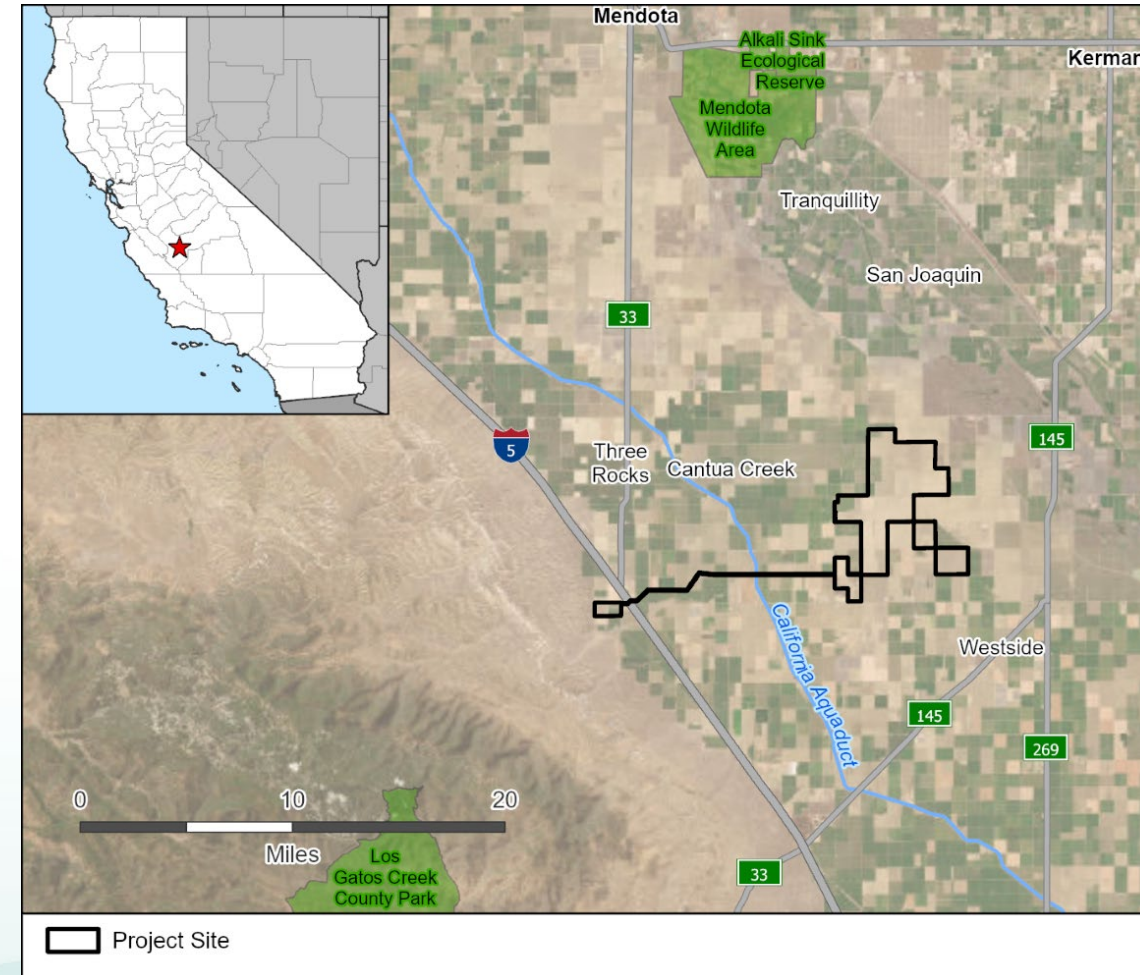
# **Project Overview**

**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





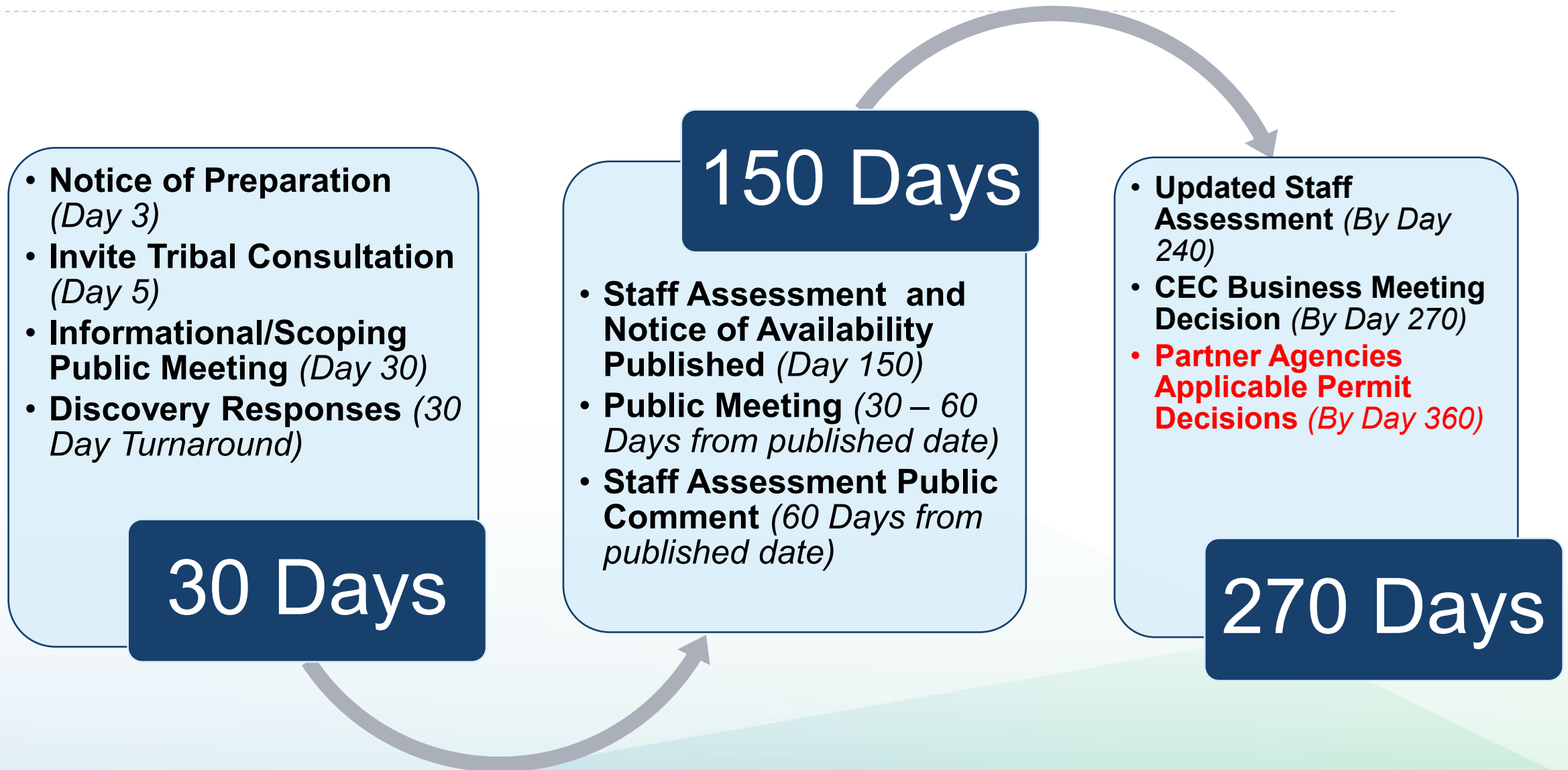
# Opt-In Findings

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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



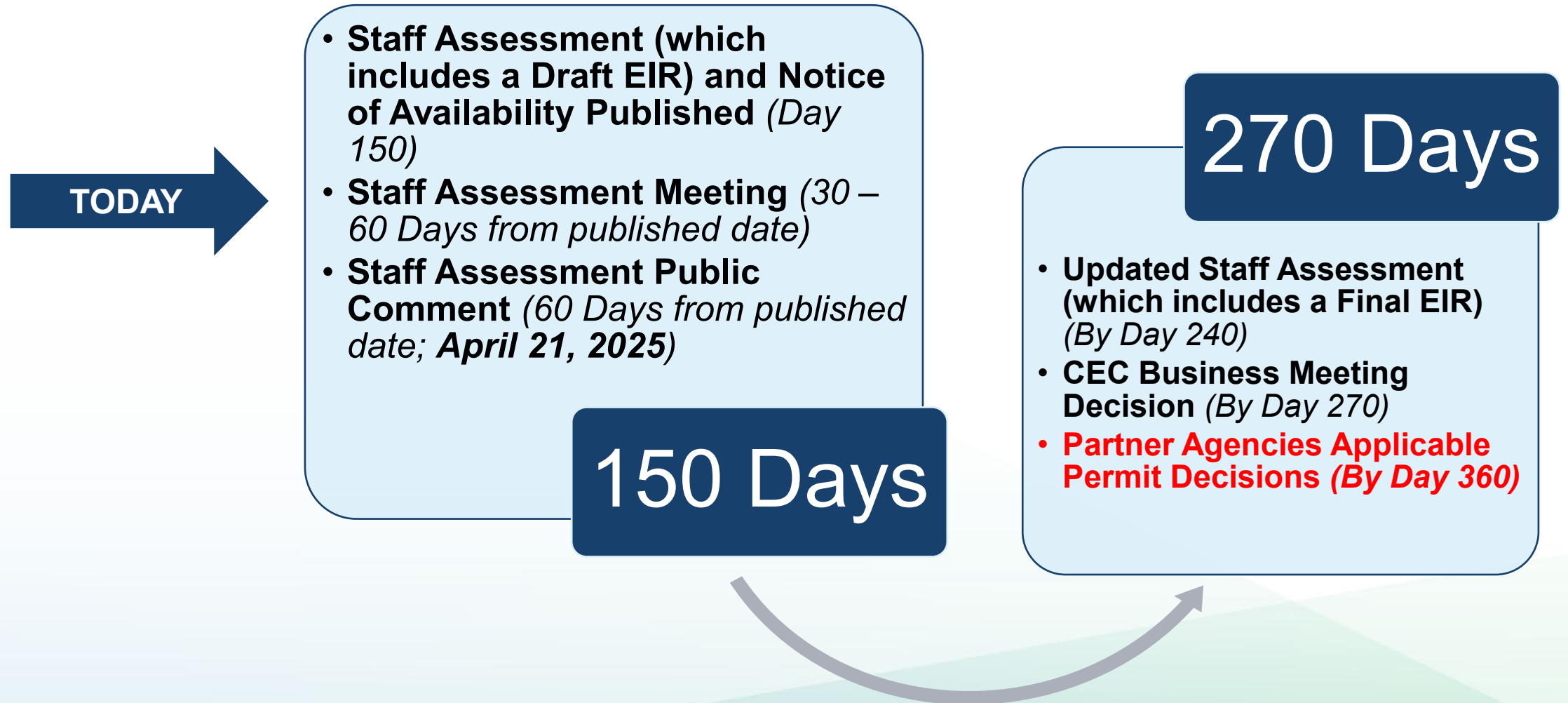


# Project Status

- 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](mailto: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.





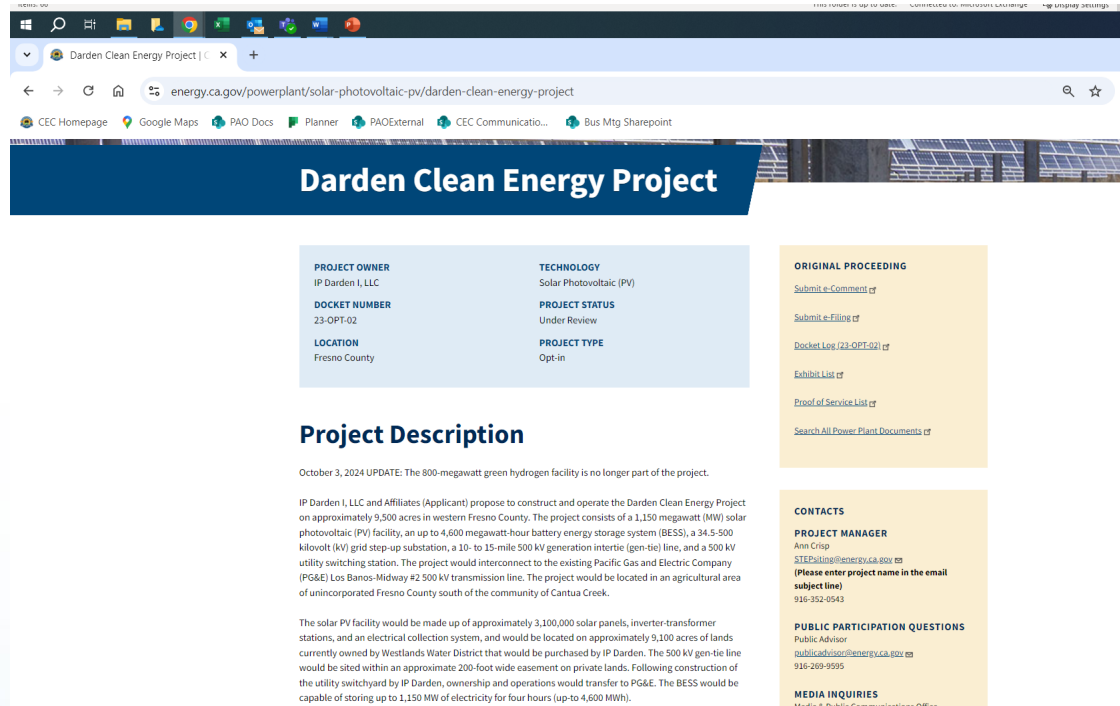
# Multiple Ways to Participate

1. Follow
2. Comment
3. Tribal Consultation





# Follow Via Web, Email and Events



The screenshot shows the 'Darden Clean Energy Project' webpage. It features a navigation bar with links to CEC Homepage, Google Maps, PAO Docs, Planner, PAOExternal, CEC Communication, and Bus Mtg Sharepoint. The main content area is divided into sections: 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 (with links to Submit e-Comment, Submit e-Filing, Docket Log, Exhibit List, Proof of Service List, and Search All Power Plant Documents), CONTACTS (PROJECT MANAGER: Ami Crisp, ST/PAO at CEC, and PUBLIC PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS), and MEDIA INQUIRIES (Media & Public Communications Office).

**PROJECT OWNER**  
IP Darden I, LLC

**DOCKET NUMBER**  
23-OPT-02

**LOCATION**  
Fresno County

**TECHNOLOGY**  
Solar Photovoltaic (PV)

**PROJECT STATUS**  
Under Review

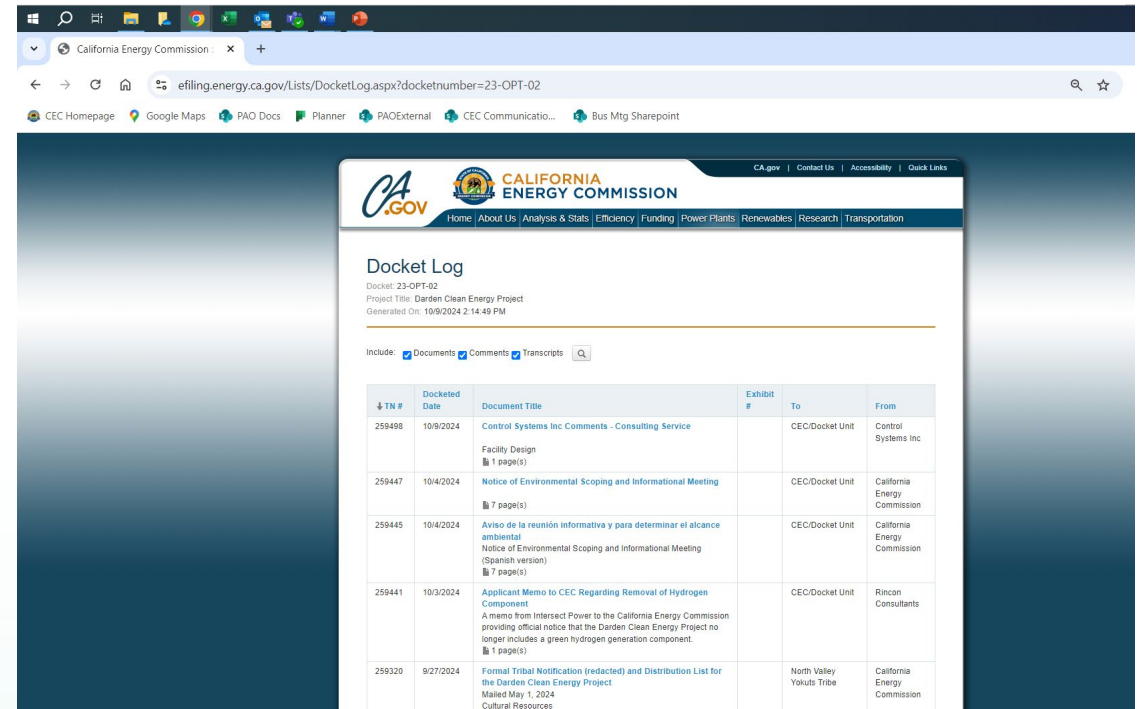
**PROJECT TYPE**  
Opt-in

**ORIGINAL PROCEEDING**  
[Submit e-Comment](#)  
[Submit e-Filing](#)  
[Docket Log \(23-OPT-02\)](#)  
[Exhibit List](#)  
[Proof of Service List](#)  
[Search All Power Plant Documents](#)

**CONTACTS**  
**PROJECT MANAGER**  
Ami Crisp  
ST/PAO at CEC  
(Please enter project name in the email subject line)  
916-352-0543  
**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS**  
Public Advisor  
[publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov](mailto:publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov)  
916-269-9595  
**MEDIA INQUIRIES**  
Media & Public Communications Office

**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).

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>



The screenshot shows the 'Docket Log' for Docket 23-OPT-02. It includes a search bar and a table of documents. The table has columns for Docketed Date, Document Title, Exhibit #, To, and From.

Docketed Date	Document Title	Exhibit #	To	From
10/9/2024	Control Systems Inc Comments - Consulting Service Facility Design 1 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	Control Systems Inc
10/4/2024	Notice of Environmental Scoping and Informational Meeting 7 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	California Energy Commission
10/4/2024	Aviso de la reunión informativa y para determinar el alcance ambiental Notice of Environmental Scoping and Informational Meeting (Spanish version) 1 page(s)		CEC/Docket Unit	California Energy Commission
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
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 Docket 23-OPT-02 for free 24/7 access to project documents:  
<https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=23-OPT-02>



# Verbal and Written Comments



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

California Energy Commission : e x +

efiling.energy.ca.gov/EComment/ECommentSelectProceeding.aspx

CEC Google News SharePoint Google Maps Comms Hub PAO - Home PAOExternal sharep... BM Staff Info Share... Code Search Mona Badie - Plann... Quorum | Home

CA.gov | Contact Us | Accessibility | Quick Links

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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 [g-CommentingHelp@energy.ca.gov](mailto:g-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

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



# **Thank you!**

## **Contact Information**

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### **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

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- 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

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## 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



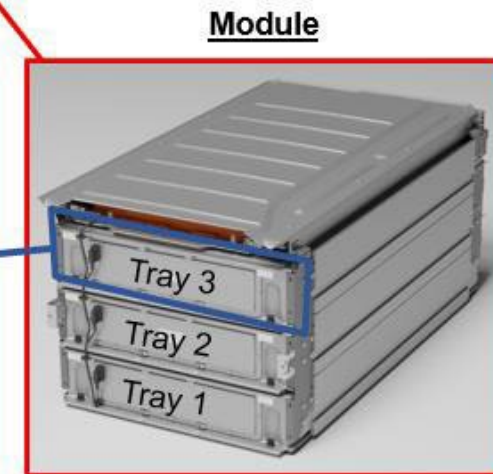
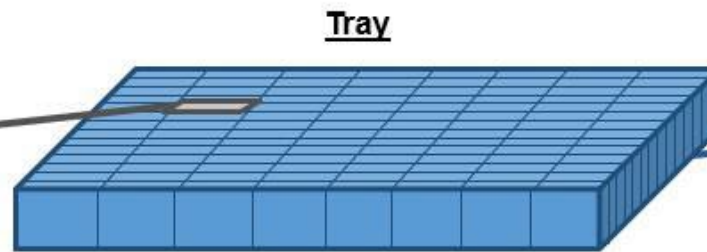
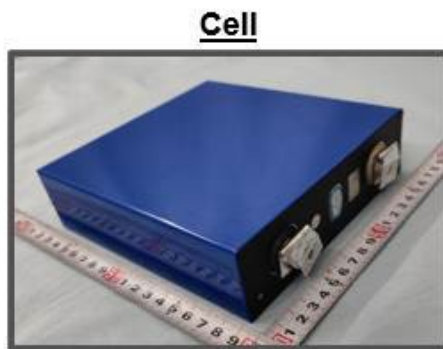
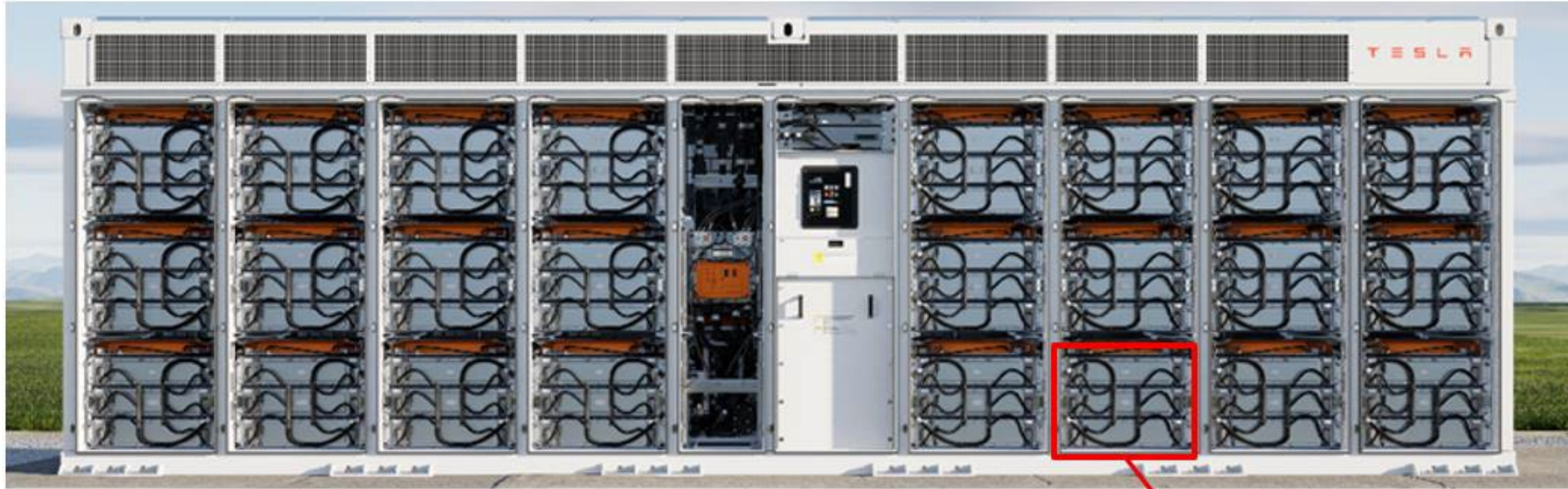
# **Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Safety**

- **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

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- **Engineering Controls**

- ☐ Internal “sparkers”
- ☐ Deflagration panels

- **Administrative Controls**

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



# Incident Response Mitigation

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- 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

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## 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](mailto:STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov)**