

REGULAR AGENDA

Scheduled and Regular Departmental items – 9:00 AM or thereafter

7. Consider oral report on response and recovery activities from Moss Landing Vistra Power Plant Fire

Name: Nina Audino

Comment - 01/28/2025 11:11 AM: (No Vote)

Dear Members of the Board:

Good Morning.

I am speaking on behalf of many residents of Santa Cruz County who have suddenly become aware of County plans to construct grid-scale BESS facilities on several sites in the County and who are very concerned about the safety of siting these facilities in or very near dense urban and suburban residential neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, farmland and protected natural sanctuaries.

It is unacceptable for a foundational infrastructural change on the scale of a 14 to 16 acre BESS facility literally on Watsonville's doorstep to be virtually absent from civic dialogue for 5 years, from when Supervisor Hernandez (according to local news articles) and former Supervisor McPherson proposed it to the board in 2019 and up to and including the Seahawk Energy Storage application for permitting.

I ask respectfully that you, the Board, immediately make information about these plans readily, transparently and completely available to the public. The current placement of the Seahawk Energy Storage project is nearly impossible to navigate to on the County website, requiring navigation through 5 website pages.

I also ask that you support Assemblymember Dawn Addis' bill AB 303 – 2025, which returns siting decision-making power to local communities.

Furthermore, I support California's carbon footprint and EV mandates and the need for sweeping infrastructural change to meet current set deadlines focused on 2035 and 2045 successfully. However, achieving those green goals cannot come at the cost of toxic disasters bred from technology that has outstripped in its application the means to safely regulate it.

That means BESS installations must be aligned with effective fire suppression techniques. Clearly, self-combusting, lithium-ion battery using BESS facilities are unsafe.

New Leaf Energy Storage is proposing the newer LFP battery for their Seahawk Energy Storage project, citing the industry standard that this lithium using battery does not self-ignite and therefore is safe enough to use. It is not immune to burning, however. Severe short circuit from faulty wiring can result in combustion. Our central coast area is disaster prone, with both high earthquake and wild fire risk. What

happens in the event of a larger disaster or in the event that for any reason an LFP using BESS facility or sections of it goes up in flames?

Right now, lithium batteries are a dominating technology, but their continued use into the next decades as we go green is increasingly under question. This is because the lithium battery is dirty technology, involving dirty extraction, a high production footprint and a high recycling footprint. There are other, safer, cheaper and more environmentally friendly battery technologies being explored aggressively right now and they will certainly be available in the near future.

If we invest in LFP technology today, would we be able to upgrade the facility likely shortly later to safer, cheaper and cleaner battery technology? At what cost?

We need to slow this infrastructural change down, so that we can ensure that the battery energy storage technology we commit to in Santa Cruz County is fully supported by safety protocols and regulations that keep up with its installation and future evolving use.

Thank you.
Nina Audino