



Item #6: Opt-In Certification: Soda Mountain Solar Project Docket 24-OPT-03

April 27, 2026, Business Meeting

Lisa Worrall, Project Manager

Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division
CEQA Project Management Unit



Opt-In Certification Benefits

- Provides the CEC a new permitting authority as the CEQA lead agency
- Provides developers an alternative permitting pathway
- Enhances grid reliability
- Ensures benefits to the community and local government
- Conducts regular inspections and compliance checks



Solar photovoltaic or terrestrial wind



Energy storage systems



Stationary power plants using non-fossil energy



Specific manufacturing or assembly facilities for clean energy



Hydrogen production facilities



Soda Mountain Solar Project

Applicant: Soda Mountain Solar, LLC

Location

- San Bernardino County
- Approximately 2,670 acres administered by Bureau of Land Management

Project

- 300 MW solar photovoltaic facility
- 300 MW (1,200 MWh) battery storage
- Generation-intertie line
- Interconnection facilities



Source: Figure 3-1 Project Site Vicinity, TN 269349



Project Timeline

Soda Mountain Solar Project

Date	Project Milestones
August 1, 2024	Application Filed
August 2, 2024	Notice of Receipt to MOU Agencies
September 3, 2024	Determination of Incomplete Application and Request for Information
September 27, 2024	Tribal Notification Inviting Consultation
July 31, 2025	Determination of Complete Application
August 29, 2025	Informational and Environmental Scoping Meeting
December 29, 2025	Staff Assessment Filed
February 5, 2026	Staff Assessment Public Meeting
February 27, 2026	Staff Assessment Comment Period Closed
March 27, 2026	Updated Staff Assessment Filed
April 17, 2026	Errata to Updated Staff Assessment Filed
April 24, 2026	Errata #2 to Updated Staff Assessment Filed



Updated Staff Assessment - CEQA Analysis

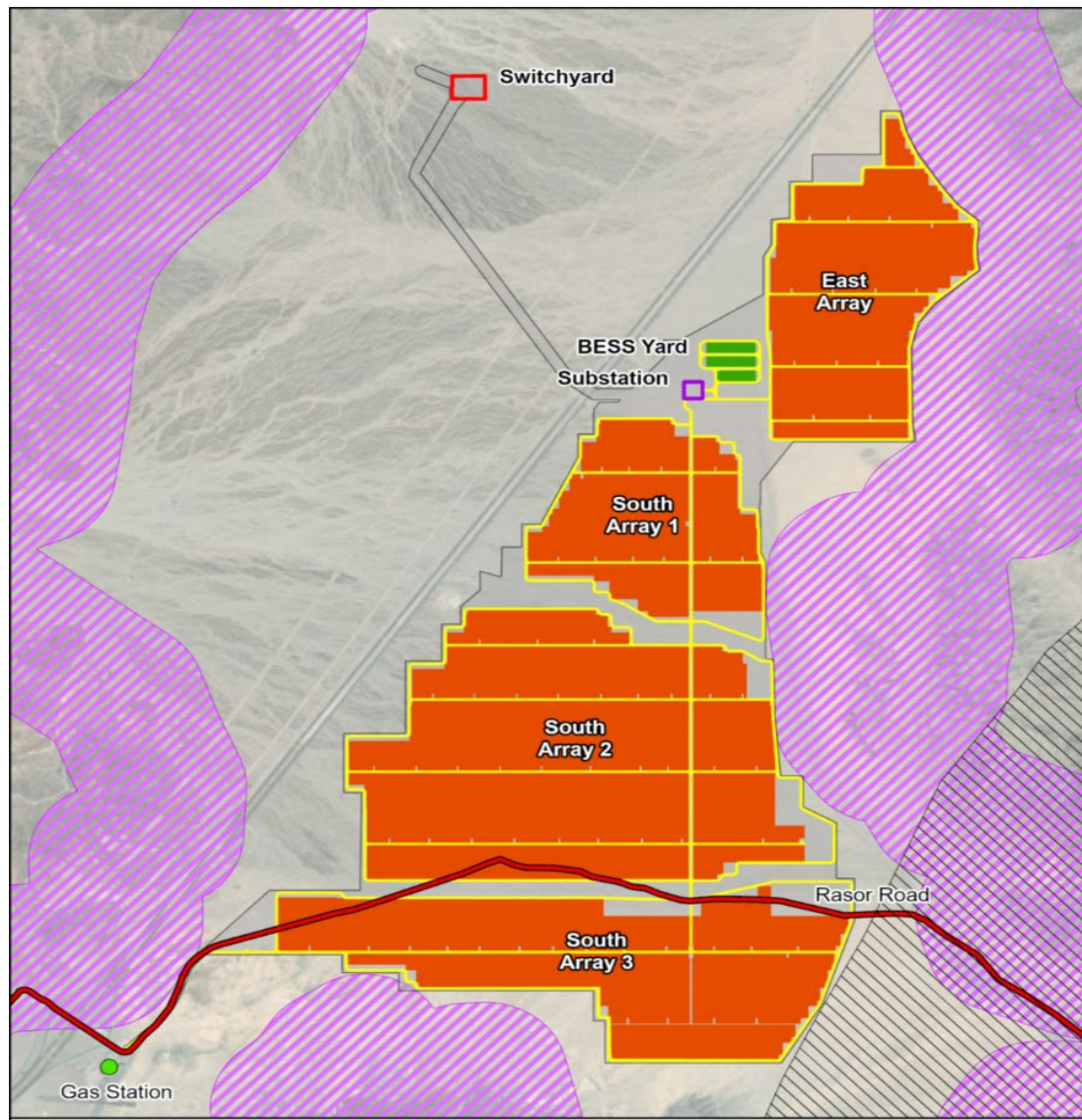
Soda Mountain Solar Project

Preparation of Environmental Impact Report (EIR) per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

- Final EIR included within Updated Staff Assessment
- Recommendation to adopt Big Horn Sheep Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2
- Mitigation Measures reduce impacts to Less than Significant except for Visual Resources (and Biological Resources for applicant's proposed project)
- Conditions of Certification serve as Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)



Staff Recommended Big Horn Sheep Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2



Relocated Features

- Battery Energy Storage System
- Switchyard
- Access Roads
- Solar Arrays
- Limit of Disturbance

Other Features

- 0.25-mile Buffer from 10% Slope Line
- Substation
- Rasor OHV Open Area
- Rasor Road
- Gas Station

Staff Recommended Alternative
Source: Figure 8-2 Bighorn Sheep and Relocated Battery Energy Storage System Alternative #2, TN 269349



Errata to Updated Staff Assessment

Edits to Biological Resources Conditions of Certification:

- **BIO-15 (Desert Tortoise)**

- Corrected calculation of the one-time payment to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Added language to allow adjustment of fee based on certified project footprint
- Corrected mitigation ratios for long term project disturbance

- **BIO-16 (Desert Tortoise), BIO-21 (Burrowing Owl), and BIO-26 (State Jurisdictional Waters)**

- Corrected mitigation ratios for mitigation or conservation bank credits
- Added language to allow adjustment of fee based on certified project footprint



Updated Staff Assessment

Soda Mountain Solar Project

Opt-In Mandatory Project Requirement	Finding
1. Pays Prevailing Wage for a Covered Project Under the California Labor Code	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Requirement met
2. Provides a Net Positive Economic Benefit to the Local Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebuttable presumption
3. Signed a Community Benefits Agreement that is Legally Binding and Enforceable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Requirement met



Staff Recommendation

Soda Mountain Solar Project

Approve the Order to:

1. Certify the Final EIR, as included in Updated Staff Assessment, Errata and Errata #2, complies with CEQA, reflects the CEC's independent judgement, and was considered and reviewed before certifying the Soda Mountain Solar Project.
2. Certify completeness of the record of the proceedings.
3. Adopt staff's proposed findings and Conditions of Certification with compliance verifications, serving as a MMRP, and staff's recommended mitigation measures.
4. Adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations for Visual Resources.
5. Issue the Soda Mountain, LLC, a certificate to construct and operate Big Horn Sheep Buffer and Relocated BESS Alternative #2.



Thank You!

Contributors and Collaborators

- Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division staff and management
- Project Assistant: Marichka Haws
- Chief Counsel's Office attorneys: Mariah Ponce, Crystal Cabrera, Susan Cochran

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- State Water Resources Control Board
- Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District
- San Bernardino County
- Bureau of Land Management
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- VC Renewables and Hannah Arkin (applicant)