

EXHIBIT BH-1-6

Supporting Factors for Battery Energy Storage in
Agriculture and Open Space Lands Designations

Planning Division Assessment Pursuant to General Plan Policy
EV-4.4 and Programs COS-O and HAZ-O to Identify Suitable
Lands and Priority Areas for the Development of Renewable
Energy Generation and Storage Projects

Case No. PL23-0075

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Exhibit 6:
Supporting Factors for Battery Energy Storage in Agriculture and Open Space
Lands Designations

Purpose

The purpose of this exhibit is to describe supporting factors for allowing limited battery energy storage within Agricultural and/or Open Space designated lands while still upholding the purpose and intent of SOAR. Planning staff relied upon the 2040 General Plan as the basis for this analysis.

Analysis

The County of Ventura Renewable Energy Project Siting Assessment (Assessment) in Exhibit 1 found that Optimal¹ lands for battery energy storage were predominantly within the Open Space (approximately 1,178 acres), Agricultural Exclusive (approximately 306 acres) and M2 and M3 (approximately 50 acres) zoning classifications.

After the GIS assessment for suitable lands was complete, policy analysis was conducted to determine whether legislative amendments for battery energy storage are consistent with the County's General Plan and other County land use measures (e.g., the Open Space zone). It quickly became apparent that planning for battery energy storage is a valuable example for consideration of how two General Plan appendices compare in their approaches to conserve natural resources and provide for health, safety, and welfare.

The update to the Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) initiative was approved in 2016 and it focuses on conservation of Open Space, Agricultural, and Rural designated lands as an approach to strengthen the local agricultural economy, preserve soils, avoid urban sprawl, and to protect public health, safety, and welfare. Grid-scale battery energy storage may not have been considered when the updated SOAR initiative was approved. The General Plan was adopted in 2020, and it includes the SOAR initiative as Appendix C, as well as the Climate Action Plan in Appendix B, which includes policies directing how rural lands support climate change resilience. Through Appendix B, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction strategies are interwoven with policies and programs that protect public health, safety, and welfare. Appendix B supports grid-scale battery energy storage.

In 2006, the State passed AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act, which recognized global warming and climate change as posing a serious threat to the economic well-being, public health, natural resources, and the environment of California. AB 32 further recognizes that climate change will have detrimental effects on some of California's largest industries, including agriculture, and will also increase the strain on

¹ "Optimal" is a shorthand reference to the areas identified in the Assessment in Exhibit 1 that ranked within the top two possible score categories for each renewable energy resource type.

electricity supplies necessary to meet the demand for summer air-conditioning in the hottest parts of the state. Therefore, the intent of AB 32 is to reduce GHG emissions in a manner that minimizes costs and maximizes benefits for California's economy, improves and modernizes California's energy infrastructure and maintains electric system reliability, maximizes additional environmental and economic co-benefits for California, and complements the state's efforts to improve air quality. This is further implemented with adoption of SB 379 in 2015, which required all local agencies with the responsibility for the protection of public health and safety to address climate adaptation and resiliency strategies within the next revision or update of the local hazard plan or safety element, and SB 100 (passed in 2018) which requires 100 percent of the State's energy to be supplied by eligible renewable resources and zero-carbon resources by 2045. SB 100 recognizes that energy storage can be used to integrate eligible renewable energy resources into the grid, which built off AB 2514 and AB 2227's requirements (passed in 2010 and 2012 respectively), to encourage California to incorporate battery energy storage into the electricity grid. The County complied with SB 379 through the adoption of the General Plan and Climate Action Plan, specifically through the goals, policies and programs of Hazards and Safety, Conservation and Open Space, and Economic Vitality Elements, which direct reduction efforts of unincorporated County GHG emissions to reach the State's AB 32 target, incorporate climate adaptation and resiliency into development, services and operations in the County, and expand renewable energy to serve the economic needs of commercial, industrial, agricultural and residential users in the county.

Additionally, the General Plan and SOAR allow land to be used for the managed production of resources, specifically land within the Open Space designation. Grid-scale renewable energy production and storage is a type of resource production that may not have been considered when the updated SOAR initiative was approved. According to the SOAR initiative, examples of managed production of resources typically include, but are not limited to, forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands not designated as Agricultural, and areas containing major mineral deposits. The understanding of managed production of resources should evolve to include renewable resource production and storage because 1) energy can be produced from renewable sources (e.g. solar and wind) which is similar to mineral extraction (e.g. oil and gas exploration and production), and 2) battery energy storage allows for the ability to store and manage the energy produced by the generators for later use and consumption. The energy, either from direct renewable production or from energy storage release, is delivered to the consumers for everyday use and helps to ensure a continuous energy supply in times of need or emergency.

In addition to addressing public health and safety, and providing a type of managed resource production and storage, the following factors could support battery energy storage in Open Space and Agricultural designated lands:

- Providing a reliable energy supply during the day and night, and in times of emergency.
- Helps to reduce the reliance on natural gas generating powerplants, including the facility at Ormond Beach. Removal of this facility will help improve the air quality of the County, including within designated disadvantaged communities.
- Limits urban sprawl development patterns because it can be developed without water and sewer lines.
- Compatibility with neighboring uses because new facilities would likely require a discretionary permit and be reviewed for/required to mitigate impacts.
- Battery energy storage is already allowed within the Coastal Open Space Zone, which is generally more restrictive than the Non-Coastal Open Space Zone. By allowing a limited amount of battery energy storage within the non-coastal zone, it would bring the two zones closer to being compatible with each other and similarly serve county communities.
- Supports public welfare by improving the economic viability of all sectors, including agriculture and ranch lands.
- Supports locating uses away from urbanized areas and thereby reduce potential impacts to residents.

Result

The factors listed above for allowing a limited amount of energy storage within agricultural, open space, and/or rural designated lands could still uphold the purpose and intent of SOAR. This initial policy analysis could be useful for a potential future vote of the people regarding an amendment to SOAR, if directed by the Board of Supervisors to implement the results of the Assessment from the COS-O Program.
