



Ventura County Board of Supervisors
Hall of Administration
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

January 27, 2025

RE: Agenda Item 33, Reserving 100 Acres for Battery Storage Projects

Dear Honorable Supervisors,

The SOAR organization opposes efforts by the County to exempt Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) from SOAR. A vote of the people is required. Exempting these facilities violates SOAR and Ventura County's General Plan, as stated in our September 23, 2023 letter to your Board.

Your staff reported to your Board September 26, 2023 that 1) BESS facilities within Agricultural or Open Space lands require a public SOAR vote, and 2) prior to that vote a CEQA analysis is required. CEQA is required since it would cause, at a minimum, a loss of farmland which is considered a significant impact that must be avoided or mitigated. Additionally, the impacts from BESS fires can severely impact the public and the environment including agricultural soils and Ventura County's agricultural industry.

Assemblymember Dawn Addis has introduced AB 303 which would remove battery energy storage facilities from the California Energy Commission's opt-in certification program, returning authority for approval back into the hands of local communities. The bill would limit where battery energy storage facilities can be located so they are not built in environmentally sensitive areas, including farmland and "land zoned or designated for protection or preservation by a local ballot measure that was approved by the voters of that jurisdiction." AB 303 would also require a 3,200-foot setback from sensitive places like homes, schools and medical facilities.

We urge your Board to protect open space and farmland and adhere to SOAR legal requirements. BESS facilities are clearly industrial uses and there is sufficient industrial land to accommodate the storage needs of unincorporated Ventura County. If SOAR-protected land is desired for a BESS facility, it must go to the voters to decide.

Sincerely,

Linda Parks

Executive Director

Save Open-space and Agricultural Resources