



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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NEWS RELEASE



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ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION TO HOLD FINAL BESS HEARING

The Santa Cruz County Commission on the Environment will hold its final Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) technical workshop on August 20th from 5-8 p.m.

The Commission will receive an update on Sen John Laird's Senate Bill 283 from Policy Analyst Khalida Sarwari. The bill aims to ensure that BESS facilities are designed, constructed, and operated with increased safety measures and local coordination, including inspections by fire officials and detailed emergency response plans. The hearing will also summarize the information previously presented by BESS experts and offer an opportunity to discuss issues and questions regarding that information.

BESS facilities are a critical component of California's shift away from fossil fuels with the potential to enhance grid stability and help utilities meet peak demand while reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Some community members have also raised concerns about safety, emergency response and long-term environmental impacts. The concerns expressed at the previous two workshops regarding these issues will be discussed more in depth at this final workshop.

"The BESS hearings have been an invaluable resource for our community, helping illuminate both the potential benefits and the risks associated with battery energy storage systems. By providing a shared baseline of accurate, fact-based information, these discussions have created space for informed dialogue and thoughtful consideration. We encourage everyone to join us for the final hearing to continue this important conversation," said Kris Damhorst, chair of Commission on the Environment.

Community members, environmental stakeholders, and energy professionals are encouraged to attend the meeting on August 20th from 5-8 p.m. in the Board Chambers of the County Governmental Center, 701 Ocean St., 5th Floor, Santa Cruz.

Remote participation is available via Zoom at: <https://santacruzcounty-uszoomgov.com/j/1603665391>.