

To: Office of Planning and Research
 PO Box 3044
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 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: California Energy Commission
 715 P Street
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Project Applicant: Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians of the Barona Reservation

Project Title: Barona Community Long Duration Energy Storage Project

Project Location – Specific: 1932 Wildcat Canyon Rd

Project Location – City: Lakeside 92040

Project Location – County: San Diego

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The proposed project will demonstrate a zinc bromine flow (ZBF) battery energy storage system (BESS) technology to provide resilient and economical energy supplies for essential Tribal facilities in the Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians of the Barona Reservation (Barona Band Reservation) community in Lakeside, within the investor-owned utility service territory of San Diego Gas and Electric. The ZBF BESS will integrate existing and planned distributed energy resources (DER) to provide resilient and economical energy supplies for essential Tribal facilities. The proposed ZBF BESS, with a nameplate capacity of 1.5 Mega Watt (MW)/6.6 MW hours (MWh), has the ability to discharge at least 100 kilo Watt for durations up to 24 hours, and as much as three MW for short durations. Demonstrating these capabilities will deliver greater resiliency and grid-infrastructure benefits and lifetime energy cost savings over competing technologies. The project will demonstrate a technology that is more flexible, allowing 100% depth of discharge without impairing BESS capacity or lifespan, and achieving MWh-scale battery hibernation to substantially eliminate self-discharge. This technology will avoid the safety, flammability, and recyclability drawbacks of Li BESS technologies.

Construction is expected to begin on September 1st, 2025, and be completed by May 1st, 2026. The project is expected to operate for approximately 20 years beginning in 2026. The project is expected to utilize 30 BESS containment vessels, which will be pad mounted. The total estimated layout for the BESS, including space for Direct Current combiner boxes and inverter, equals approximately 5,900 square feet, while the estimated area for switchgear and other balance of systems components equals approximately 500 square feet or less. The entire BESS system is to be located on previously disturbed and developed land comprising graded dirt and gravel. The electrolyte is the only hazardous materials associated with the project. Each BESS contains approximately 100 liters of electrolyte, with an integrated secondary containment capable of containing the entire volume of electrolyte, as a safety container. All plumbing is located within the envelope of the secondary containment bund. The entire system is composed of modular containment vessels that will contain a cumulative total of approximately 60,000 liters of electrolyte. The BESS is delivered to the site in a zero percent state of charge, fully discharged, but ready to operate and fill with electrolyte. During shipping, unloading, and installation, the electrolyte is always contained within primary and secondary containment vessels. Electrolyte is not handled on-site during construction or operations. Service activities requiring electrolyte handing will be conducted off-site at a designated service facility. The BESS manufacturer recommends that spill kits be kept on-site, while standard lead-acid battery spill kits are appropriate.

Sitework is expected to require access by approximately 20 light, medium, and heavy-duty construction vehicles each day for several weeks during active excavations for equipment pads and PV array supports, and deliveries of equipment and materials for the project. These vehicles will include personal vehicles for construction personnel as the bulk of the equipment, with water trucks, delivery vehicles, forklifts, and similar being the remainder. Previously disturbed vacant land in the immediate vicinity will be designated for parking and staging of equipment and materials during construction activities. The BESS delivery would require approximately 18 20-foot shipping containers delivered and unloaded at site. During commissioning, staff will require two vehicle trips per day, for approximately one month. Less than 30 construction workers will be on-site for several weeks during active construction, with fewer than 10 on-site during

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

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commissioning and testing activities. Chain-link fencing around the battery and power conditioning equipment is planned as part of the project, as typically required by electrical codes.

Trenching for electrical conduits and conductors between battery pad and equipment location and existing facilities will be required. Minor excavations of a few feet in depth or less will be required for installation of concrete pad mounted equipment. Minor clearing and grubbing will be required, as will some leveling, however, no import or export of soils is anticipated. The BESS will be housed in outdoor-rated container enclosures, and no new small structure are planned for the project.

A site map of the proposed work is included as an attachment demonstrating that the proposed project will occur on previously disturbed land and within the boundaries of the Barona Band Reservation.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Energy Commission

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians of the Barona Reservation

Exempt Status: *(check one)*

- Ministerial Exemption (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(1); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(3); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(4); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number
Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15301
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number.
- Common Sense Exemption. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15061(b)(3))

Reasons why project is exempt:

Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, sect. 15301 provides that projects which consist of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, and which involve negligible or no expansion of existing or former use at the time of the lead agency's determination, are categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The proposed project will consist of the installation of a microgrid system at the reservation of the Barona Band of Mission Indians in Lakeside. The microgrid system installation will be a minor alteration to an existing facility within the interior of the reservation with no expansion beyond the reservation operation. Additional minor alterations to topographical features include minor grading and/or trenching for concrete pads. This project will result in negligible or no expansion of use beyond that already existing. Therefore, the project falls within section 15301 and will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Vehicle trips associated with the construction of the project will be temporary and the operation of the microgrid system will result in a negligible number of regular operational trips for maintenance. BMPs will be used during installation and operation of the micro grid system. Therefore, no adverse effects to offsite air or water quality will occur as a result of the project. The installation and operation of the microgrid system would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of off-reservation visual resources, as the system components are not visually obtrusive.

Additionally, this project is covered by the Common Sense Exemption under Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, sect. 15061 (b) (3) that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

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This project will take place on tribal land, but off-reservation impacts must still be evaluated under Government Code section 12012.101(b)(2), but this project is exempt under the “common sense” CEQA exemption because the proposed project will not:

- construct on or alter any off-reservation land;
- impact local air quality;
- use groundwater resources or otherwise impact any off-reservation water resources;
- build additional transportation infrastructure;
- generate additional traffic volumes;
- increase, once the project is complete, ambient noise beyond the existing commercial activities; or
- degrade the visual character or quality of off-reservation views, including those of scenic resources or objects of aesthetic significance.

Compared with the current supply of energy, the proposed project will improve energy resiliency for Tribal facilities and the local electric grid, as well as reduce overall energy demand on the local energy provider and lower fossil fuel usage and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Because the proposed project will improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions, and does not provide for any physical changes outside of the Indian reservation, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed project may have a significant effect on the off reservation environment. Based on all these factors, the proposed project meets the CEQA “common sense” exemption.


The project does not involve impacts on any particularly sensitive environment; will not impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies; does not involve any cumulative impacts of successive projects of the same type in the same place that might be considered significant; does not involve unusual circumstances that might have a significant effect on the environment; will not result in damage to scenic resources within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway; the project site is not included on any list compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5; and the project will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Therefore, none of the exceptions to categorical exemptions listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 apply to this project, and this project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Sean Anayah **Area code/Telephone/Ext:** (916) 931-5044

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature:  **Date:** 6/25/2024 **Title:** EGSSI

Signed by Responsible Agency

Signed by Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR: _____