

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting Date: February 02, 2026 – Monday

Time: 1:00 PM

To be approved by SEATAC at a future meeting

SEATAC MEMBERS

Ty Garrison

Wendy Katagi, Ph.D.

Cassy Aoyagi

Jennifer Lentz, Ph.D.

Greg Pauly, Ph.D.

LA COUNTY PLANNING STAFF

Tyler Montgomery, Senior Planner

Karla Moreno, Biologist

Cameron Robertson, SEATAC
Coordinator

PART I – PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1. Roll Call

PART II – MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

Motion to approve the July 7, 2025 minutes, with revision to include the topic of photo monitoring in the comments section, made by Katagi and seconded by Aoyagi. Lentz abstained. The motion passed.

PART III – OLD BUSINESS

[none]

PART IV – NEW BUSINESS

2. PROJECT: Catalina Airport Solar Project
Project No.: PRJ2022-004233
Permit Nos.: CUP RPPL2022013117, CDP RPPL2022013100
APNs: 7480-041-042
LOCATION: Catalina Airport in the Sky
SEA: Buffalo Springs SEA
USGS QUAD: Santa Catalina North
APPLICANT: Emily Mallonee
BIOLOGIST: Gretchen Cummings, Cummings Environmental, Inc.
DRP PLANNER: Tyler Montgomery
DRP BIOLOGIST: Karla Moreno

Project Description: The application is a request to authorize an approximately 10,400-square-foot ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) system installation, enclosed by perimeter chain-link fencing. The project requires a coastal development permit ("CDP")

as well as a significant ecological area conditional use permit ("SEA-CUP"), as development is proposed on the same lot as the Buffalo Springs Significant Ecological Area ("SEA").

The proposed solar PV system will be located on a south-facing slope between Airport in the Sky and Airport Road. The site is surrounded by existing development, including airport facilities to the north, a utility road to the west, and Airport Road to the south and east. The project site is approximately 790 feet south of the Buffalo Springs SEA, which is located north of Airport in the Sky.

SEATAC Comments:

- SEATAC asked if solar roof mount installation was considered over solar ground installation. Mark Tholki, Project Manager for Golden State Renewable Energy, answered that solar roof mount was considered but was not feasible.
- SEATAC asked if there were any other solar ground installation elsewhere on the island with similar vegetation. Dr. Lauren Denhart, Senior Director of Conservation for the Catalina Island Conservancy, clarified that she is not aware of any other solar ground installation on the island.
- SEATAC provided a concern of the shade impacts on the vegetation underneath the solar ground mount. Dr. Denhart stated the project impact area is the least impactful area with degraded lemonade berry. The island restoration project will be mitigating for impacts starting with 10 acres, of which 0.81 acres will be for the solar ground installation project site.
- SEATAC recalled the County's recommendation to adjust the educational signage and asked if there were vandalism issues on the island. Dr. Denhart and Gretchen Cummings, Project Biologist, stated there is minimal vandalism across the island with issues coming from cut fences for access to unauthorized areas. The simple educational signage was also a safety recommendation to deter human attention too close to the fenced solar site and to keep from potential collection of the fenced sensitive species.
- SEATAC recommends the monitoring and adaptive management not solely be focused on the mitigation area, but also on the project impact area given both sites would have exclusionary fencing that could result in wildlife harm. In addition, the recommendation would include photo monitoring to allow staff to be aware of any type of harm or impact to species.
- SEATAC recommends to always have escape ramps for any trenches or holes left open or that may be unattended.
- SEATAC comments that the project report has a leading sentence in the project description (page 4) and recommends not using leading sentences in future projects.
- SEATAC shared a concern for the minimal amount of time taken to perform the plant survey and asked about the extent of the snail survey that was requested during the previous meeting. Gretchen Cummings explained the plant survey method performed on the project site and stated the snail survey was limited to rocks and areas that were able to be lifted or turned.

Motion/second by Pauly/Lentz:

Move that the Significant Ecological Areas Technical Advisory Committee close the review of Project number PRJ2022-004233 and find that the project is consistent with the Significant Ecological Areas program policies and development standards with minor project modification and recommend approval of the project to the Regional Planning Department. The minor modifications would be camera monitoring for one year post fence construction and the use for escape ramps for any holes or trenches.

Vote: The motion carried unanimously.

PART V – PUBLIC COMMENT

4. **Public comment pursuant to Section 54954.3 of the Government Code:**
There was no public comment.

PART VI – ADJOURNMENT

5. Adjournment to 1:00 pm, March 4, 2026.

MEETING MATERIALS: The agenda package is accessible on the Department's website at <https://planning.lacounty.gov/agenda/seatac>. Any meeting-related writings or documents provided to a majority of the SEATAC after distribution of the agenda package, unless exempt from disclosure pursuant to California law, are available online or retained as noted above.

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