



January 12, 2026

To the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

From Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice
450 Geary Street, STE M101, San Francisco, CA 94102

**SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CONCERNS ON THE
PROPOSED BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM ORDINANCE**

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice writes to support and uplift community concerns on the deficiencies in the Santa Cruz County proposed Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Ordinance and the growing concern about the Lithium Battery Energy Storage System proposed on 90 Minto Road in Watsonville near socially vulnerable communities.

We call on the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors to create an ordinance that protects the health and safety of all community members and the environment, without the influence of developers or proposed facilities. New Leaf Energy's proposed BESS project on 90 Minto Road in Watsonville, adjacent to the Schapiro Knolls Affordable Housing and the Diamond Estates and Amador working-class subdivisions, would have a harmful and discriminatory impact on environmentally and socially vulnerable populations in Santa Cruz County. Necessary efforts to decarbonize and move toward clean energy should not rely on solutions that continue to put marginalized communities at risk. It is critical the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors produce and adopt an ordinance that protects and prioritizes the community and environment, now and in the future.

The Ordinance must include robust safety requirements that protect neighboring communities and the environment as well as include incentives for non-lithium battery use. The current updated Ordinance draft's safety requirements are not strong enough to protect Santa Cruz County from flammable and explosive lithium-ion battery energy storage systems. Development standards in the Ordinance must protect all people, especially socially vulnerable populations. The Ordinance must further address the *cumulative impacts* faced by communities in Santa Cruz County by including all socially vulnerable populations including, but not limited to, low income communities and communities with existing environmental burdens such as pesticide exposure.

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors must also ensure meaningful public participation is available and accessible. We uplift the request to hold a continued discussion of the BESS Ordinance at the February 10, 2026 Board meeting that is scheduled to be held at the 500 Westridge Drive South



County Government Center in order to provide better access and involvement of Watsonville residents and the City of Watsonville. Holding the January 13th meeting in Scotts Valley does not allow for accessible in person participation for residents living near the proposed lithium BESS facility as these residents would be the most impacted by an inadequate ordinance that does not thoroughly protect their health and environment.

In solidarity with the Watsonville and Santa Cruz County communities,

Skylar Sacoolas
Environmental Justice Organizer
Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice