

Energy Commission Weighs in on Morro Bay Energy Storage Project

The Pecho Energy Storage Center, which would store energy as compressed air in a facility on an 80-acre site in the Chorro Valley, one mile east of Morro Bay, and send it to the PG&E switching station via a new 3 ½ mile transmission line, will have to pass muster with the California Coastal Commission.



The only U.S. compressed air storage plant, in McIntosh, Alabama.

That word came down on December 22 as part of the California Energy Commission’s response to a permit application filed by Hydrostor Inc. The proposed facility’s major components would consist of four air compressor trains, four 100-MW power turbine generators, heat exchangers, thermal heat storage, an underground compressed air storage cavern, an above ground water reservoir, auxiliary facilities, and the new transmission line.

While Energy Commission staff found the project application did not meet the requirements for adequate data in the areas of Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Efficiency, Geological Hazards, Land Use, Project Overview, Reliability, Socioeconomics, Transmission System Design, Visual Resources, and Water Resources, it singled out the following:

“Land use data inadequacies are noteworthy. The project site is in the coastal zone and subject to two related long-range land use plans. The two plans are the California Coastal Commission’s Designation of Coastal Zone Areas Where Construction of an Electric Power Plant Would Prevent Achievement of the Objectives of the California Coastal Act of 1976 (last adopted in 1985) and San Luis Obispo County’s Local Coastal Program. Page 69 of the Coastal Commission plan designates the Chorro Valley along Highway 1 as unsuitable for power plants due to protected views in that area. It also describes the need for minimal alteration of the Morro Bay watershed, which includes the Chorro Valley area.”

Hence:

“A determination will be required by the Coastal Commission on the suitability of the site for development of a thermal power plant, as well as the project’s consistency with the California Coastal Act and Local Coastal Program.”