COLAB
San Luis Obispo County
The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

WEEKLY UPDATE
Aug 3 – 10, 2025

The Power Is Out For The JPA

The Monday morning quarterbacking on details of the defeated Paso Robles Area Groundwater Authority JPA effort will be rampant and will probably go on for years. The 689 irrigated ag parcel owners that took the time to fill out and mail their protest against the JPA sealed the fate of those that sought to manage and regulate groundwater throughout the basin via what was perceived as an expensive and bureaucratic new government agency.

It is unlikely that debate about who was right, whose facts were correct and who helped or hindered the issue will ever be resolved. That said, it is hopeful that, once the dust settles, both sides will realize (and perhaps agree) that the underlying question had little to do with water or taxes.

The key issue throughout the entire process was trust - and the lack there of.

For the proponents of the JPA, there seemed to be little effort to bring "North County people" into the process. It appeared that most locals included in the formation process were those already in the water business.

Too many were dubious about the veracity of JPA proponents' promises and assurances after a history of frustration regarding fallowing problems. Other historical concerns were inspired by large agricultural landowners who reputedly were able to manipulate water policies to their advantage over the years.

Recent turmoil within some City Council politics and personalities, combined with active participation from at least one county official (that is not popular in much of north county) only served to further mistrust. The way many felt that they were being rushed added to the unease. The method that the Prop 218 voting status was defined seemed like people who should have had a say were being robbed of their vote.

Aside from trust, the question of need for a new government agency was never fully addressed. That the new agency was projected to cost $3 million annually was never sufficiently justified. That it would be run by a company in Bakersfield that most folks had never heard of didn't offer many assurances. The question of the state possibly taking control of the basin through the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act was not fully believed or understood.

One of the most challenging aspects of participating in any sort of public campaign in San Luis Obispo County is media coverage. For opponents, local radio shows and CalCoast News covered most of their positions, but never really did a deep dive into arguments for a JPA. For proponents, the local radio and news coverage must have been frustrating, but it didn't appear that effort was made to offer a counterpoint. Neither The Tribune nor KSBY television did much to cover the topic. Probably because it's a complex issue and doesn't make good clickbait.

With a complicated and confusing issue, in an environment where trust is scarce, time is short and answers are hard to get, it should be no surprise that so many opposed the measure.

There was one more factor, though. The opponents had an active and committed grassroots organization that worked every possible aspect of the community. They showed up at meetings, distributed their information to the public everywhere possible and made sure those that were allowed to vote got their protest notices in.

Proponents held three information meetings seeking to interact with anyone who had questions. The outreach, however, might have been too late in the process. They had answers to many of the questions on people's minds but had a difficult time getting the answers out. Meetings by the four water districts that were part of the JPA proposal have been few and far between, but might have otherwise been a good tool for communications.

Sooner or later, the question of how to best manage Paso Basin groundwater will be back. Hopefully it will be addressed in a more inclusive approach that begins with north county residents leading the discussion. Questions about property rights and who owns the water need to be fundamentally addressed.

An understanding is also needed about what the state will actually do if no sustainability plan is in place the near future. No threats, no worst-case scenarios being offered up as some sort of certainty. The actual costs of maintaining a sustainability plan should be laid out in detail, with the fewest frills and red tape expenses possible.

Our nation, our state and even our county are all divided in a coast vs inland, urban vs rural battle. The handling of this issue only seemed to exasperate the divide in our community. Everybody agrees that water is vital. Determining which solutions are needed and coming up with ways to achieve those solutions shouldn't be an "us vs them" process.

Lets hope that there is less finger pointing and more dialogue as we go forward.

This Week

The agenda for the Aug 5 SLO County Board of Supervisors is light with 23 out of the 27 agenda items being on consent. A few items stand out:

Trash and Taxes vs Fees

An item we covered in June was continued and scheduled for this meeting as item 1 on the agenda. It involves a proposed solid waste collection rate increase within the service area provided by Mission Country Disposal in the unincorporated areas of the County of San Luis Obispo that include rural areas of Los Osos, Morro Bay, Cayucos, San Simeon, Cambria, and Harmony. It seems that the rate increase proposal was for every customer in the service area even though some communities are not offered the same coverage as others.

A case could be made that charging customers for services not provided would be a tax instead of a fee. Further, the inequity is pretty outrageous.

The issue came to light when a customer took the time to come to a Board of Supervisors meeting and point out the inequity as Mission Country Disposal was requesting approval for the rate increase. Without this one person's objection, the rate increase probably would have sailed through.

Supervisor Gibson challenged the rep for the disposal company about the problem. The rep acknowledged the imbalance but was unable to justify it.

Gibson requested that the item be continued until Aug. 5, but now, staff is requesting a further continuance to Aug 19. This would indicate that the disposal company might be in a pickle and hasn't yet figured out how to address it. They may need to offer a discount to those communities that don't get full service, but that discount will cut into the extra revenue that they are hoping to get with the increase.

It is heartwarming to see a single ratepayer stand up and make a difference. We look forward to watching how this imbalance is handled.

Homeless Funding Request

Another item (number 22) on consent is a "Request to 1) Authorize the Director of Social Services or his designee to submit a joint application for the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program Grant Round 6 Continuum of Care and County allocations in the amount of $2,772,758, and 2) Authorize the Director of Social Services or his designee to enter into and amend contracts with the State needed to carry out the program, and 3) Authorize the Director of Social Services to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the San Luis Obispo County Continuum of Care committing to participate in and comply with the Regionally Coordinated Homelessness Action Plan."

The request includes a three page outline of specific objectives and partnership activities and seems like a well though out plan, along with a three-page Memo of Understanding outlining responsibilities and the comprehensive 45 page application/action plan.

What is not included is any sort of detail about how the previous action plans have been of value to the taxpayers. It seems like every month or two, a health related item (usually involving mental health or homeless services) pops up on the consent agenda for a couple of million dollars here or a few million dollars there. Occasionally a question or two will be lobbed out, but it's very rare that a discussion of detailed performance is raised. Which leads us to item 24…

Homeless Funds Accountability

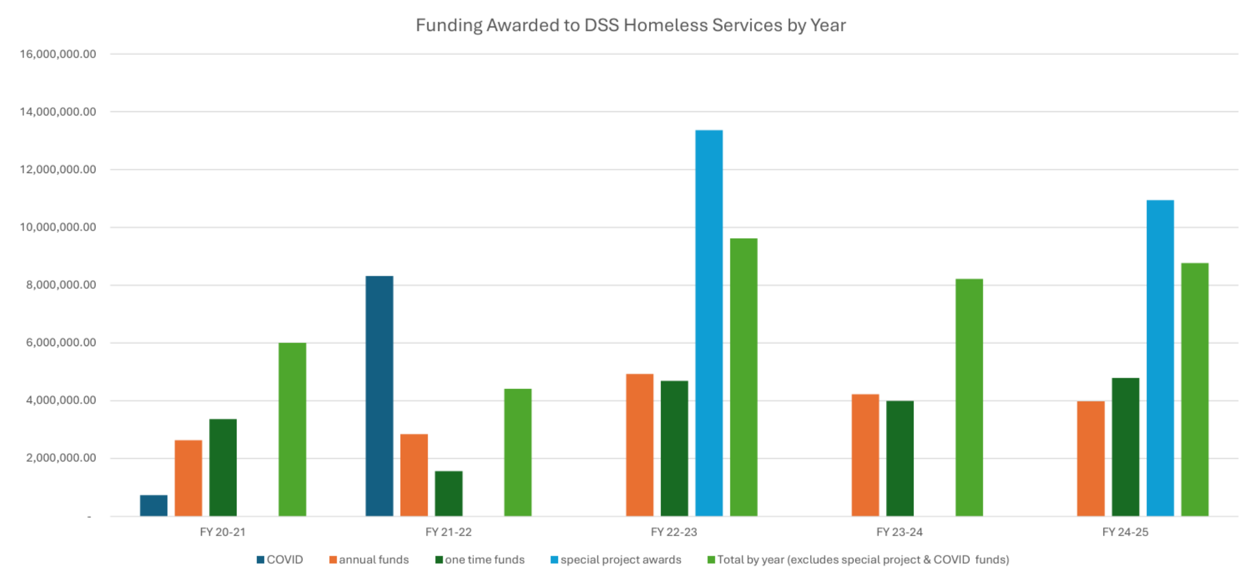
Item 24 reads: "Request to 1) receive and file a progress report on the San Luis Obispo Countywide Plan to Address Homelessness 2022-2027; 2) approve staff's recommended process and criteria for $2.5 million of one-time project funding allocation, of which the Board earmarked during the FY 2025-26 Budget Hearing to support homeless services; and 3) provide direction as needed."

This report seeks to offer a detailed analysis of the efforts by the county to address homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. It includes funding levels, what funding was used for and how that relates to the number of homeless people who are living in our community. The complete 20 Page report can be found at:

https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/file/getfile/171394

Reading the report, one continually wonders why with all these dollars spent, the problem persists at such high levels. Clearly, the overall program is making progress, especially as compared to other communities around the state. But it's almost scarry to imagine dividing the number of dollars spent by the number of homeless served.

Below is a breakdown of Department of Social Services funding by year.



Whatever levels of funding are granted, there is always seems to be a need for more. Below is a breakdown of the needs for the additional $2.5 million sought in this motion:

Recommendation for $2.5 Million One Time Project funding to Support Homeless Services

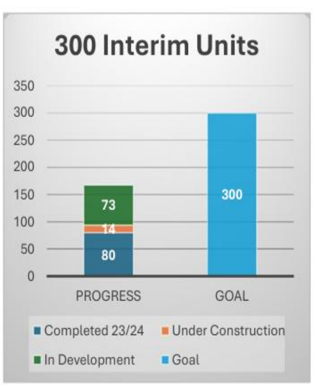
1. Community Based Organizations must have been previously awarded funding by the County Board of Supervisors for the proposed project under one or more of the following funding types for FY 2024-25:

2. Eligible project types include:
   - Prevention
   - Outreach
   - Rapid Re-housing
   - Emergency shelter operations/supportive services
   - Permanent Supportive Housing Operations/supportive services

Capital improvement projects are not eligible for this one-time funding.

- These funds shall be used as the funding of last resort; any unspent funds may be rolled over for up to one additional fiscal year upon approval.
- All requests for funds must be accompanied by a letter from City leadership outlining how City participates in funding or operational support of the proposed project which operates within their jurisdiction. For projects which may serve multiple areas of the county, applicants may provide a lett explaining what areas they propose to serve with a description of how those cities participate in the project.
- All requests for funds must be accompanied by information outlining other leveraged sources of funds and supports that are used to operate the project being funded.

Housing is a critical element in homeless services. Below are three graphs detailing progress of attaining the estimated need:



The following is the bottom line in terms of services provided and at what cost:

2024 System Snapshot

- 4,311 Individuals served in HMIS participating programs
- 2,077 Individuals experiencing homelessness for the first time
- 1,140 Individuals exited to permanent destinations
- $9.7M awarded in FY 24/25 for homeless services programs
- $5.5M awarded in FY 24/25 for affordable housing& PSH projects

That county staff has and is reporting these numbers is good. That they are making progress towards providing housing is good and that the number of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County is being reduced is also good. Perhaps future accountability reports might focus on what aspects of the plan are most effective and what measures could be taken to reduce costs.

We appreciate the analysis that is being presented and encourage as much accountability as possible. Especially when so much of other people's money is involved.

More Fireworks?

One last item was added to the agenda at the last minute. It reads:

Added item #27 - Request to receive a report from the Fireworks Task Force on the outcomes of communication and enforcement strategies implemented between July 3 and July 6, 2025, and provide direction as necessary.

The subject of fireworks regulation was a "hot topic" earlier in the year when the Board of Supervisors approved enforcement policies for illegal use. Now, for the first time, a look at whether those measures were understood, and whether they made a difference, will be explored. The tragic fire at the Templeton Feed and Grain building could impact discussions.

An Honor Well Deserved

One of COLAB's founders (and all-around beloved community leader) was honored last week as the San Luis Obispo County CattleWomen's Association 2025 Cattlewoman of the year. A resolution honoring Debbie Arnold for the achievement will be presented at the August 5 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Debbie (along with the whole Arnold family) has been an intrigal part of the cattle industry for years and the award is well desirved. The announcement was made at Cattlemen's Day at the Midstate Fair. But just to top it all off with a little whip cream and a cherry on top, Steve and Debbie's youngest granddaughter Josie won the Grand Champion Heifer at the fair. Congratulations to the Arnold family.

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Correction on Phillips 66 Story

Two weeks ago, we reported that the Board of Supervisors had a hearing scheduled for an appeal of the Planning Department permit approval of the cleanup/remediation plan by Phillips 66 on their closed south SLO county refinery property. It was incorrectly reported that the appeal was filed by the California Coastal Commission, when in fact, the appeal was filed by the Sierra Club.

The hearing was continued. Perhaps the continuance indicates that both sides are talking. We can only hope that property rights are not on the line and that the property owner isn't expected to incur unreasonable expenses above and beyond those that they have already committed to in cleaning up the site.

We apologize to our friends and supporters with the Coastal Commission and the Sierra Club for the mix up.

Last Week

Two Board Seats on the Next Ballot

We won't invoke the tired old cliché about the races heating up for the two County Supervisor seats that will be on the ballot on June 2, 2026 – in less than 11 months, because, well, they haven't yet. That doesn't mean that they don't have the potential to become quite competitive.

With Supervisor Bruce Gibson not running for reelection (after nearly 16 years) to the 2nd District, that open seat would naturally be attractive to all sorts of aspirational community leaders. So far, the two candidates to declare are Jim Dantona (President and CEO of the SLO Chamber of Commerce), a lifelong Democrat and resident of Cayucos and, just recently, Micheal Erin Woody from Morro Bay (a civil engineer and former Fresno City Councilman) and a former Republican who left the party in Trump's first term.

Through his service as President and CEO of the SLO Chamber of Commerce, it seems likely that Dantona will have a good fundraising base and a comprehensive knowledge of the issues facing SLO County.

Dantona's statement to the Tribune was: "I'm running for supervisor because I believe San Luis Obispo County can be a model for what's possible. We have the tools, the talent, and the values to protect our environment and coastline while building something even better, with smart planning and bold leadership, we can grow an economy that creates good-paying jobs and affordable housing, supports working families and ensures the next generation has every reason to stay."

Woody has a lengthy list of civic involvement and has served in elected office in the past. He should have a clear idea of what it takes to successfully fundraise, but it remains to be seen whether his network of primarily anti-wind power/battery storage activists will be able to help him raise sufficient funds to be competitive.

Woody, in his statement declaring his candidacy, according to CalCoast News, said “For too long, District 2’s coastal communities from Los Osos to the Monterey County Line have not been heard by local politicians ” which seems to be a direct swipe at Supervisor Gibson.

The apparent shot across the bow makes the race somewhat intriguing. While Gibson and COLAB rarely agree on much, it’s hard to imagine anyone being more receptive to coastal environmental issues than Supervisor Gibson.
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In the 4th District, Supervisor Jimmy Paulding, a Democrat, is running for reelection, with Adam Verdin (local businessman) challenging.

While County Supervisor races are “non-partisan”, they often seem to follow party lines. It is likely that the local Republican and Democrat Parties will get deeply involved in the 4th District race, clearly distinguishing which candidate is from which party and drumming up support from party loyalists.

Voter registration in Paulding’s 4th district is 38% Republican, 35% Democrat and 17% Decline to State. The numbers make this district competitive from a partisan standpoint.

Gibson’s 2nd district is solid blue, with registration at 24% Republican, 47% Democrat and 19% Decline to State. These numbers indicate that any Republican candidate would be dreaming if they hoped to have a chance.

With the advantage of incumbency, Paulding should have little trouble raising funds, but it remains to be seen how successful his fundraising will be in a race that requires an expensive campaign. It does seem to be apparent that Paulding is working hard at constituent services and getting face to face with the voting public. One big question is whether Paulding’s voting record aligns with the values of his constituents.

Paulding’s statement to the Tribune reads: “This isn’t just a campaign; it’s a continuation of the work we’ve done together to build a more fair, resilient and responsive county government,” Paulding said. “But that progress is at risk. Special interests are already gearing up to try and take back this seat and bring back the old way of doing things — political games, incivility and a lack of real results. We can’t let that happen.”

Verdin’s family business, the well-known Old Juans Cantina in Oceano, is a popular and successful local business. Established over 40 years ago by Adam’s father, the restaurant has been a fixture in south county culture for generations. The Verdin family has been deeply involved in the community and is well connected among much of the voting population in the 4th district. In addition to the family business, Verdin is a professional pilot and has served on several boards and commissions throughout San Luis Obispo Conty.

Verdin’s statement on his campaign webpage reads: “I am running for San Luis Obispo County Supervisor because I love this community and want to do everything we can to keep it safe, prosperous, and affordable for future generations. I believe we need local leaders who truly understand our community and will work tirelessly to improve it. We face real challenges—affordability, infrastructure, public safety and homelessness—but with focused, experienced leadership, we can secure a bright future for everyone who calls this place home.”

Like Paulding, Verdin will be challenged to raise sufficient funds to get his message out. Also, like Paulding, Verdin has been highly visible and seems to be connecting with community leaders and voters at an aggressive pace.

Estimates for the cost of a competitive race run from $250,000 to nearly $500,000. Costs include polling, consulting, staff and communications. The latter will involve not just direct mail and media buys, but a wide variety of social media. Knocking on doors and attending every community event possible will also be part of the winning strategy.

It is far too early to make any predictions or bets, but it is refreshing to see accomplished community leaders with strong business backgrounds running. San Luis Obispo County is facing economic stagnation. Our county budget spending (nearly $1 billion annually) is starting to outpace our revenues. If we continue without a different approach, it won’t be long before we face severe cuts. Strong fiscal restraint and careful economic development can take us on a more prosperous and sustainable tract, but it will require a change in the way the Board of Supervisors does business.

Paso Water Basin

A nearly last-minute announcement was made just after our publish deadline for the last edition of this newsletter establishing a meeting for the Paso Robles Area

Groundwater Authority (PRAGA) on Wednesday, July 23 at 4:00 PM at the Paso Robles City Council Chambers.

Apparently, the meeting was primarily to discuss pending litigation. And what a discussion it must have been! Shortly after the meeting began, it was adjourned for closed session with legal counsel. The subject matter according to the agenda was one lawsuit. More than an hour of closed discussion passed before the public meeting resumed.

One of the additional items on the agenda was supposed to be a report from Land IQ, the firm responsible for estimating water usage via satellite technology. Unfortunately, they did not show up for the meeting.

Another agenda item was to be a discussion on short-term funding alternatives, but that topic was deferred.

The scheduled August 1 meeting remains the date to count protests that were sent in by Ag Irrigator parcel owners. We understand that about 1300 notices were mailed, meaning 651 protests would need to be filed to overturn the establishment of the JPA. Protests filed by De Minimus users will not be counted, but will be tracked by opponents of the JPA. Any litigation would need to be filed within 45 days of the August 1 count.

There is still a lot of sable rattling going on within the community regarding various supposed breaches of legal procedure and questions about authority, but it remains to be seen whether anything else gets filed.

Below is the accounting of PRAGA'S assets and recent expenditures that was released at the July 23 meeting:

Paso Robles Area Groundwater Authority

Balance Sheet

As of June 30, 2025

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
Chase Bank Checking	223,312.71
Total Bank Accounts	**$223,312.71**
Total Current Assets	**$223,312.71**
TOTAL ASSETS	**$223,312.71**
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
Accounts payable	104,739.99
Total Accounts Payable	**$104,739.99**
Total Current Liabilities	**$104,739.99**
Total Liabilities	**$104,739.99**
Equity	
Retained Earnings	
Net Income	118,572.72
Total Equity	**$118,572.72**

Receipts and Disbursements

Paso Robles Area Groundwater Authority

May 1-June 30, 2025

TRANSACTION DATE	TRANSACTION TYPE	NUM	NAME	FULL NAME	AMOUNT	BALANCE
Chase Bank Checking						
05/29/2025	Bill Payment (Check)	2500	HUB International Insurance Services	Chase Bank Checking	-5,835.29	-5,835.29
05/29/2025	Payment	1096591149Ff	Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District	Chase Bank Checking	10,000.00	4,164.71
06/04/2025	Payment	Unknown	Shandon-San Juan Water District	Chase Bank Checking	47,719.00	51,883.71
06/10/2025	Payment	76646	City of Paso Robles	Chase Bank Checking	35,908.00	87,791.71
06/10/2025	Payment	3078495	County of San Luis Obispo GSA	Chase Bank Checking	76,304.00	164,095.71
06/10/2025	Payment	1412	Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District	Chase Bank Checking	59,217.00	223,312.71
Total for Chase Bank Checking					**$223,312.71**	
TOTAL					**$223,312.71**	

Budgetary procedures were discussed. The gap between $223,312 and the estimated $3 million annually required to manage the basin under the JPA has a lot of water bills in its future.

The 30-page draft Cost of Service Study can be found at:

https://www.pasoroblesaga.org/files/bdf961ce6/DRAFT_Paso+Robles+Area+Groundwater+Authority+Cost+of+Service+Study+May+2025.pdf

EMERGENT TRENDS - SEE PAGE 15

Long Term Electricity Storage

California's wind and solar projects face new federal hurdles

COLAB IN DEPTH

SEE PAGE 23

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin Making Heads Explode by Repealing Obama Era Climate Policy

SPONSORS

Long Term Electricity Storage

Edward Ring
Californians for Energy and Water Abundance

Silicon Valley veterans view Sacramento's obsession with renewables mandates with pragmatic detachment. Blessed with disposable income sufficient to make them indifferent to the price of gasoline or electricity, they view life on the bleeding edge as an opportunity for California to lead the world into the electric age. They're not wrong. Heartless, perhaps. But not wrong.

If a more appropriate balance can be struck between a few thousand strategic investors using our state as a petri dish from which to birth an electric future — and the less glorified but more compelling aspirations of tens of millions of state residents who are just tired of politically enforced downward mobility — we might set an example of broad based prosperity along with bleeding edge innovation. Imagine decentralized, private, rooftop photovoltaics, with utility scale storage decentralized and privatized as well, thanks to millions of EV owners selling electricity using vehicle-to-grid home hookups. No more duck curve. Abundant baseload power. Affordable utility bills.

There is nothing wild or crazy about that scenario. Solar panels are cheaper every year, robotic recycling is on the way, and battery technology for both stationary and vehicle applications is becoming less resource intensive, more practical, and more affordable. Even without subsidies, writing off the competitive potential of photovoltaics and batteries is probably shortsighted.

But a solar energy solution still fails in one critical area. Even in subtropical California, the short days in winter result in a photovoltaic yield that averages 16 percent of panel capacity, versus an average yield of 33 percent in the summer months. For photovoltaic and battery systems to generate sufficient electricity from our winter sun, they need to be built to literally twice what would be enough to power the state during the summer.

This calls for long-term electricity storage, and the quantities required are daunting. Let's assume the California Energy Commission's stated goal of 500,000

gigawatt-hours per year of electricity production (in 2023 we consumed 281,140 GWH, producing 215,623 GWH in-state and importing the rest) is achieved exclusively with photovoltaics. That would equate to an average output of 57 gigawatts. With an average year-round yield of 25 percent, that would require a photovoltaic array generating 228 gigawatts in full sun.

Here's where it gets fun. For the sake of argument, let's assume 20 watts per square foot of PV and 90 percent space utilization. That's 500 megawatts of output per square mile in full sun, or 1,000 gigawatt-hours per square mile per year. That is not an unrealistic projection when taking into account ongoing advances in PV and inverter efficiencies and may ultimately be too low. But using these assumptions, with a footprint of 500 square miles – preferably privately financed on rooftops – photovoltaics can generate 500,000 gigawatt-hours of electricity per year, and they can use millions of connected EV batteries to balance daily fluctuation.

The problem is that this generation is seasonally uneven. To be grossly simplistic but nonetheless to accurately determine the basic scale of this challenge, assume photovoltaics deliver a 16 percent yield in winter, 33 percent in summer, and 25 percent in spring and fall. That means that in the spring and fall, production of 125,000 gigawatt-hours is equal to demand, but in summer a stupendous 165,000 gigawatt-hours are generated, and in winter only 80,000 gigawatt-hours are generated. So how do we save 40,000 gigawatt-hours from summer, to be discharged in winter?

This is the quandary facing photovoltaic power. Batteries will balance night and day. But can they balance summer and winter?

One intriguing solution to this quandary is synthetic geothermal power. A company pioneering this technology, Premier Resource Management (PRM), aims to construct a pilot project in Kern County over the next few years. The concept rests on the potential of underground formations of porous rock to retain vast quantities of heat for extended periods of time. Thus it is possible to charge the rocks with heat during the summer and harvest it in the winter to generate electricity. Because Kern County's oil industry has already evaluated the underground strata in order to recover oil, there are hundreds of known sites where the technology can be developed.

As a video produced by PRM's technology partner, Ramsgate Engineering, LLC, explains, the project calls for a single-axis parabolic trough array to heat water in a closed loop to avoid introducing contaminants. Then in a separate closed loop, water is pumped out of the underground formation, screened for contaminants,

then passed through a heat exchanger that is heated by the water circulating in the parabolic trough system. The heated water is pumped back into the underground formation, slowly building its temperature up to over 400 degrees. Then, as needed, the water circulating in and out of the underground formation is itself redirected through another heat exchanger which is used to boil water that passes through a third independent loop. This boiling water is used to drive a steam turbine to generate electricity.

With apologies to the PRM team, that's an oversimplified explanation of a complicated design (watch the video, lingering on the site diagram at 3:40), but this concept offers something batteries cannot. A system that can store gigawatt-hours of energy for months at a time. PRM estimates a 2,000 acre parabolic trough array, positioned over an underground formation with a volume roughly equivalent to a regular cube 100 meters on a side, would have the potential to discharge 400 megawatts continuously for up to 1,000 hours. The project is expected to have an operating life of about 100 years.

To put 400,000 megawatt-hours (400 GWH) into perspective, it means that you would need 100 of these installations (40,000 GWH required / 400 GWH per system) to balance summer and winter in an all-PV, 500,000 GWH per year California. But the estimated potential of this system to also deliver night-time electricity year-round more than doubles its estimated annual power storage capacity, to about 1,000 gigawatt-hours per year. Do the economics work?

At an estimated cost of $2.0 billion, financed at 4 percent, 30 year terms, the annual financing repayment would be $115 million, equating to $0.12 per kilowatt-hour. The ultimate break-even price per kilowatt-hour would have to increase, of course, to cover operating costs and profit, and the annual loan repayments could be lowered to the extent financing is via equity or other non-interest-bearing instruments. Total construction costs could drop as more plants are built. And even if daily fluctuations in the price for electricity are eliminated with batteries, winter power may still sell at a premium that lifts the business to profitability. Moreover, there is potential to recover additional oil from these wells with minimal additions to the plant investment.

We can embrace that hybrid approach that makes long-term electricity storage using synthetic geothermal power more attractive economically, or we can see this promising technology migrate to Texas, a state equally blessed with an abundance of depleted, well mapped underground formations. Perhaps our Silicon Valley innovators can commercialize a chemical process that extracts energy from oil without emissions, or they can help overhaul the refining technologies that give us products made from oil derivatives. Or they might just recognize that until we aren't importing a single drop of crude oil from overseas, we may as well produce it here.

Edward Ring is the Director of Water and Energy Policy at the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013. Ring is the author of Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism (2021) and The Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California(2022).

California’s wind and solar projects face new federal hurdles

by Alejandro Lazo
July 14, 2025

California’s drive to run its electric grid entirely on wind, solar and other clean sources of energy just got harder after President Donald Trump signed a sweeping new budget law.

The changes in federal tax incentives could affect the feasibility of new solar and wind projects as the state is counting on them to provide more electricity for Californians. A state law requires 100% of electricity to be powered by renewable, carbon-free sources by 2045, at the same time it’s moving to electrify cars and trucks.

Incentives championed by former President Joe Biden were rolled back, shortening the timeline for the industry to obtain tax credits. Developers of wind and solar projects now face a new, shorter deadline for obtaining tax credits — most now expire at the end of 2027 instead of no sooner than 2032.

In addition, the new federal rules bar companies from accessing tax credits if they rely on major components from China or other “foreign entities of concern.” This restriction could hit California’s solar and wind industry especially hard, experts said.

The changes to tax credits are estimated to save the federal government approximately $499 billion from 2025–2034.

“For too long, the Federal Government has forced American taxpayers to subsidize expensive and unreliable energy sources like wind and solar,” Trump wrote in an executive order last week. “The proliferation of these projects displaces affordable, reliable, dispatchable domestic energy sources, compromises our electric grid, and denigrates the beauty of our Nation’s natural landscape.”

Projects can still be built without tax credits. But it puts more of a financial burden on their investors. In California, 11 solar projects and one onshore wind project now face potential delays or cancellation, according to an analysis of federal data by Atlas Public Policy provided to CalMatters. The projects are spread across the Central Valley, Inland Empire and Northern California.

Sean Gallagher, senior vice president of policy for the Solar Energy Industries Association, said in a statement that the industry was still "assessing what the federal tax bill means for them." He warned the changes could jeopardize up to 35,700 solar jobs and 25 solar manufacturing facilities in California — including existing positions and factories as well as future projects that may now never materialize.

"The reality is, with or without clean energy tax credits, California's energy demand is growing at a historic rate, and solar and storage are the fastest and most affordable way to meet that demand," Gallagher said.

California in recent years has been fast-tracking massive floating offshore wind farms 20 miles off the coasts of Humboldt County and Morro Bay. The federal changes add some uncertainty that could chill investment. But experts say it's not a death knell for the industry because the projects weren't set to seek federal permits or generate electricity for at least several years.

"Offshore wind is what we would call a long-lead project. It does take years and years to develop," said Assemblymember Dawn Addis, former chair of the Assembly's Offshore Wind Select Committee. "Solar is a little bit shorter of a time frame…but it's also his incredibly erratic behavior when it comes to market stability overall that is also going to affect these projects in a negative way."

Experts say in the long-run, the federal changes could drive up energy costs.

"Tax credit savings are typically passed onto ratepayers through lower contracting costs. In the long term, the repeal of the tax credits will result in higher future electricity rates for customers," the California Energy Commission told CalMatters.

Rising utility bills are already a major political headache for state leaders and a challenge for clean energy advocates who want the state to lead the way in making electricity cleaner, cheaper, and more reliable.

"The whole point of California's climate policy is not just to reduce California's carbon footprint — because we are less than 1% of global emissions — but to set an example and show that this can be done," Berkeley economist Severin Borenstein told CalMatters. "There are going to be fewer other states following our example because it's going to be more expensive."

The new hurdles for solar and wind come as they are scaling up to meet surging electricity demand nationwide, including from energy-hungry data centers fueling the rise of artificial intelligence.

California Energy Commissioner Nancy Skinner, in an interview with CalMatters, said the federal law is a national "job killer" and was short-sighted. "The economics of renewable energy generation speak for themselves....The cost of solar generation now is competitive with natural gas," she said.

"We're not going to back away from our commitments and our goals," she added. "Our commitment — whether it is to zero-emission vehicles, or to renewable energy generation — is about cleaning the air as well as addressing the climate crisis…Nobody wants to live in smoggy communities, where the air you're breathing hurts you."

Solar and wind projects have helped California log key renewable energy milestones in recent years. Last week, Gov. Gavin Newsom said nine out of every 10 days so far in 2025 have been powered by non-fossil fuels for at least a part of the day.

"The economics of renewable energy generation speak for themselves....The cost of solar generation now is competitive with natural gas."

The state's grid runs on a mix of renewables — solar, wind, geothermal, nuclear, biomass and hydropower — an average of seven hours a day, the governor said, citing new data compiled by the California Energy Commission.

"The fourth largest economy in the world is running on more clean energy than ever before," Newsom said in a statement. "Trump and Republicans can try all they want to take us back to the days of dirty coal but the future is cheap, abundant clean energy."

But industry officials say the state isn't doing enough. They say the state has too many hurdles for building wind and solar projects and needs to offer more funding.

"For years now, too many California leaders have retreated from true clean energy leadership — hopefully the tax bill serves as a wakeup call that their leadership on clean energy is more important now than ever," Gallagher said.

Trump and Congress did not shorten the tax credit deadlines for nuclear power plants, hydroelectric facilities, battery storage and geothermal plants. Congress also dropped a provision that would have added a new excise tax on wind and solar.

For wind and solar, there's still a possible path to claim tax credits if construction starts within a year or they come online by the end of 2027. Senators added that provision to soften the blow. In theory, those projects could be finished and connected to the grid as late as 2031 and still qualify, but that depends on how the Treasury Department defines what it means to “start construction,” said Kevin Book, an energy analyst based in Washington, D.C.

“In the short-term, it might actually increase or shift earlier expenditure on these kinds of clean energy projects and all else equal,” said David Victor, a professor of public policy at UC San Diego. “California is in a pretty good position to profit from that acceleration.”

But Victor warned that the long-term costs could become “a political nightmare.”

“The long-term incentive, clearly, is to try to slow down investment in solar and wind and electric vehicles,” Victor said.

Borenstein took a more measured view about the impact on costs: California’s high electricity prices aren’t mainly about power production — they’re driven by wildfire costs, including past damage payouts and upgrades to prevent future fires. Other drivers include subsidies for low-income customers and the cost shift from rooftop solar, he said.

Some legislators have advocated for the state budget to cover more of these costs, but Borenstein said it’s politically easier to keep charging customers through their electric bills.

Alex Jackson, who leads the industry group American Clean Power California, said the state should use money from its cap-and-trade program to lower bills. Cap and trade is a market system that charges California companies for the greenhouse gas emissions they produce. Jackson said those funds could help pay for grid upgrades so ratepayers don’t have to.

He said the state also could lower clean energy costs by speeding up permitting, easing environmental rules for upgrades to existing projects and reducing costs for turning farmland into solar farms. He also called for expanding regional electricity markets to help California trade power more efficiently — a controversial idea being debated in the Legislature this year.

“We’ve really aggressively invested in clean energy, and we need to ramp up that investment, and we need to make it easier and faster to get clean energy deployed.”

The state Legislature has debated for years exempting some clean energy projects from the state’s landmark environmental law, the California Environmental Quality Act, which is often blamed for delays. State Sen. Scott Wiener, of San Francisco, has advocated for such changes.

“California has always been a leader, and we need to step that up significantly,” Wiener told CalMatters. “We’ve really aggressively invested in clean energy, and we need to ramp up that investment, and we need to make it easier and faster to get clean energy deployed.”

In addition to the wind and solar credits, the budget signed by Trump also ends tax credits for purchase of electric cars, rooftop solar panels, home batteries, heat pumps, insulation, energy-efficient windows and doors, and other upgrades. Rooftop solar tax credits end this year. Federal tax credits for hydrogen production end after 2027 — a blow for California, which had positioned itself as a national hydrogen hub. Those changes are estimated to save about $543 billion from 2025–2034.

The state Energy Commission said the elimination of the EV credits beginning on Sept. 30 will mean "lower adoption of electric vehicles" and a "potential short-term spike in ZEV sales" before that date. Rooftop solar projects and heat pump sales also are likely to decrease, the agency said.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin Making Heads Explode by Repealing Obama Era Climate Policy

Endangerment regulations paved the way for Electric Vehicle Mandates

By Katy Grimes, July 30, 2025

Global warming. Global cooling. Climate change. Clean air regulations. CO2. Climate regulations. Global climate fight.

Most people just call it weather – atmospheric conditions. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin is proposing the largest deregulatory action in the history of the United States, by repealing the 2009 Obama EPA "Endangerment Finding," the central basis for much of the U.S.'s climate policy, which directed all the greenhouse gas regulations on vehicles that followed, and the much despised start/stop feature.

The Endangerment Finding, is a finding under the Clean Air Act that claims greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare.

The regulation has been used to justify over $1 trillion in regulations, including the Biden-Harris Administration's electric vehicle (EV) mandate.

Professional climate change charlatans claim:

"The action would mean full-blown warfare against all things climate."

"It is obvious, of course, that greenhouse gases emitted from sources regulated by the Clean Air Act endanger public health and welfare. The science could not be clearer that greenhouse gas emissions have already led the earth to warm — so much so that it now appears we have breached the 1.5 C limit the global community committed to in the Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015. We are seeing the effects of climate change on the ground and across the globe in the form of hotter temperatures, more frequent drought, more intense flooding, fiercer hurricanes, and more intense wildfires."

Zeldin said "we will claim no statutory authority beyond the plain language of the law, and we will heed the calls of Americans demanding relief from extreme economic pain."

"In what would amount to one of the largest deregulatory actions in the history of the United States, the Trump EPA is proposing to rescind the 2009 Obama EPA Endangerment Finding which has been used to foolishly inflict over $1 TRILLION in economic pain on the American people," Zeldin posted to X.

In May California Governor Gavin Newsom claimed that greenhouse gas emissions are down in California – not just down but "down 20% since 2000."

"Pollution is down and the economy is up," Newsom said. "Greenhouse gas emissions in California are down 20% since 2000 – even as the state's GDP increased 78% in that same time period," Newsom says, in a press statement bragging that the "State invests nearly $33 billion in cap-and-trade dollars to make communities cleaner and healthier."

Newsom gets this groundbreaking information from none other than the California Air Resources Board – a highly partisan board made up of Newsom appointees. And now the governor wants to extend the shady cap-and-trade program out beyond 2030 to reach the 2045 goals. The grift never ends in Newsomworld.

As the Globe has been pointing out for many years, California already surpassed its original greenhouse gas emissions reductions target of 1990 levels of by 2020 – this was achieved in 2016 – even the Governor's Climate Dashboard website admits this:

"The 2006 California Global Warming Solutions Act (Assembly Bill 32) set a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions back to 1990 levels by 2020. California surpassed this target four years early in 2016, and emissions have continued to drop since then, largely due to increasing technology. California's next climate target is to reduce emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. The Scoping Plan lays out how California will achieve this target."

This is why California Democrats have to keep moving the goals – we already are a clean state, with some of the cleanest air in the world.

Fortunately, EPA Administrator Zeldin is on to this climate grift.

Zelding continued:

If finalized, the proposal would repeal all resulting greenhouse gas emissions regulations for motor vehicles and engines, thereby reinstating consumer choice and giving Americans the ability to purchase a safe and affordable car for their family while decreasing the cost of living on all products that trucks deliver. Administrator Zeldin was joined by U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, Indiana Governor Mike Braun, Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita, U.S. Representative Jim Baird (R-IN-04), Indiana Secretary of Energy and Natural Resources Suzanne Jaworowski, and the Indiana Motor Truck Association.

Since the 2009 Endangerment Finding was issued, many have stated that the American people and auto manufacturing have suffered from significant uncertainties and massive costs related to general regulations of greenhouse gases from vehicles and trucks. Finally, EPA is proposing to provide much needed certainty and regulatory relief, so companies can plan appropriately, and the American people can have affordable choices when deciding to buy a car.

"With this proposal, the Trump EPA is proposing to end sixteen years of uncertainty for automakers and American consumers," said EPA Administrator

Zeldin. “In our work so far, many stakeholders have told me that the Obama and Biden EPAs twisted the law, ignored precedent, and warped science to achieve their preferred ends and stick American families with hundreds of billions of dollars in hidden taxes every single year. We heard loud and clear the concern that EPA’s GHG emissions standards themselves, not carbon dioxide which the Finding never assessed independently, was the real threat to Americans’ livelihoods. If finalized, rescinding the Endangerment Finding and resulting regulations would end $1 trillion or more in hidden taxes on American businesses and families.”

“Thanks to President Trump’s leadership, America is returning to free and open dialogue around climate and energy policy – driving the focus back to following the data,” said U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright. “Today’s announcement is a monumental step toward returning to commonsense policies that expand access to affordable, reliable, secure energy and improve quality of life for all Americans.”

The left doesn’t even try to hide their schemes any longer:

“The endangerment finding didn’t just lead to greenhouse gas standards for cars and trucks. The word ‘endangerment’ is used in other sections of the Clean Air Act too, and, of course, greenhouse gases are pollutants under the Act. That means that almost all of EPA’s major regulations to cut greenhouse gases are issued under the CAA, including regulations to cut emissions from power plants and to regulate methane from oil and gas operations in addition to rules regulating emissions from light duty vehicles (cars and SUVs) and medium and heavy duty trucks.”

They lament:

“If the Administration were to reverse the endangerment finding, greenhouse gases would no longer need to be regulated under the Clean Air Act. Presumably, EPA would then simply move to revoke all of Biden’s major climate rules regulating cars, trucks, power plants, and oil and gas operations.”

Yep. That’s the plan.

Expect another lawsuit against the Trump administration from California’s eager beaver governor and obsequious parasite Attorney General.

###

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