Approval Precedents: Imperial County Battery Storage (Sample)

By Stephen Lloyd, Siting Desk (sitingdesk.com). Research as of Nov 16, 2026.

Scope: every battery storage approval by Imperial County's Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors from January 2024 through January 2026, alone or paired with solar, plus the projects still in review.

1. Bottom line

Imperial approved seven battery projects in those two years, and six went to one applicant, Apex Energy Solutions. A standalone battery that needed only a conditional use permit went to the Planning Commission and was decided about two months after its CEQA document posted. Projects that also needed a general plan amendment and rezoning went to the Board and took six to fifteen months.

Two things changed on Dec 9, 2025. The Board approved the Big Rock 2 Cluster over the Planning Commission's unanimous opposition, and the Imperial Irrigation District sued. The same day, the Board capped solar and battery projects on farmland for one year.

2. Approvals, newest first

Project (applicant)	Size	Entitlements and CEQA	Decision and timing	Vote and conditions on record	Source
Seville 4 (Apex)	90 MW solar, 180 MW storage	Plan amendment 24-0003, zone change 24-0004, use permit 24-0012; negative declaration (SCH 2025070240)	Board, Jan 27, 2026; 6 months after the first state filing	Vote not in the notice	Notice of determination; CEQAnet record
Seville 5 (Apex)	65 MW solar, 130 MW storage	Plan amendment 24-0004; negative declaration (SCH 2025070239), with mitigation made conditions	Board, Jan 27, 2026; 6 months	Vote not in the notice	Notice of determination
Big Rock 2 Cluster (90FI 8ME LLC, an Avantus project)	Up to 500 MW solar and 500 MW storage on 1,849 acres	Plan amendment 24-0002, zone change 24-0003, four use permits, four variances, water supply assessment; EIR (SCH 2024090063)	Board, Dec 9, 2025; 15 months after the notice of preparation	The Planning Commission opposed it unanimously; the Board approved it anyway. The Imperial Irrigation District sued under CEQA.	Notice of determination; KXO; Beyond Borders News

Project (applicant)	Size	Entitlements and CEQA	Decision and timing	Vote and conditions on record	Source
NorthStar 3 (Apex)	100 MW solar, 200 MW storage on about 585 acres	Plan amendment 23-0002, zone change 23-0002, use permits 23-0007 and 23-0008 (well), water supply assessment; MND (SCH 2024060955)	Board, Feb 11, 2025; 8 months after the MND posted	A public service agreement made a condition of approval	CEQAnet record; Citizen Portal on the Feb 11 meeting
NorthStar 1 (Apex)	50 MW solar, 75 MW storage	Plan amendment 23-0001, zone change 23-0001, use permits 23-0005 and 23-0006 (well), water supply assessment; MND (SCH 2024060951)	Board, Feb 11, 2025; 8 months	A public service agreement made a condition of approval	Notice of determination; Citizen Portal
Alba Peaker BESS (Apex)	100 MW storage on 6.3 acres near Seeley	Use permit 23-0025; MND (SCH 2024100832)	Planning Commission, Dec 11, 2024; 2 months after the MND posted	7-0 with no public speakers. Tesla Megapack units and an on-site water pond or tank for firefighting. Appeals were due within 10 days.	Planning Commission minutes; Notice of determination
Holtville Peaker BESS (Apex)	100 MW storage	Use permit 22-0029; negative declaration (SCH 2023110549)	Planning Commission, Jan 10, 2024; 2 months after the first state filing	On June 11, 2025 the Commission extended the permit term from 15 to 30 years.	CEQAnet record; Citizen Portal on the amendment

Months run from the first state CEQA filing (the month in the SCH number) to the decision. Application numbers carry the filing year: use permit 22-0029 was decided in January 2024 and 23-0025 in December 2024.

3. What the record shows

- The approval path set the timeline. The two standalone batteries needed one use permit each and cleared the Planning Commission in about two months. Every project that needed a plan amendment went to the Board, and none took less than six months.
- Water came up as a condition. Alba was approved with an on-site pond or tank for firefighting, and the NorthStar projects carried water supply assessments and permits for their own wells.
- NorthStar 1 and 3 carried public service agreements as a condition of approval.
- Holtville's permit term doubled to 30 years a year and a half after approval.
- Big Rock 2 is the one project in the set the Planning Commission opposed, and the Board's approval over that opposition drew the county's water district into court.

4. What changed on Dec 9, 2025

The day it approved Big Rock 2, the Board adopted a one-year cap that holds solar and battery projects on farmland to 7% of the roughly 538,326 acres the county zones agricultural, and asked staff to report back within six months (Beyond Borders News, Dec 11, 2025). Reports do not say whether projects already filed are exempt.

5. Still in review

Project	Size	Status	Source
Border BESS (Apex)	75 MW storage	MND posted March 2026; needs a plan amendment, a conditional zone change to M-1-RE and use permit 24-0027	CEQAnet
NorthStar 2 (Apex)	130 MW solar, 175 MW storage	MND posted April 2026	CEQAnet
Saavi Imperial Power BESS	400 MW storage on 39.25 acres	EIR notice of preparation February 2025; needs a plan amendment, rezoning to M-2 and a use permit	CEQAnet
Titan II BESS	40 MW storage added to use permit 17-0006	EIR notice of preparation June 2026	CEQAnet

6. Open questions a client report would chase

- The Board votes on Seville 4, Seville 5 and the NorthStar projects, from the minute orders.
- The signed conditions of approval for each project, fire conditions first.
- Whether the farmland cap reaches projects already in review, and what the six-month staff report, due about June 2026, recommended.
- The status of the Imperial Irrigation District's suit over Big Rock 2, which the Siting Desk lawsuit tracker follows.

This sample is research from public records, not legal advice. Confirm each finding with the county and counsel before relying on it.