



**DRAFT NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

TO:  Office of Planning & Research  
P. O. Box 3044, Room 212  
Sacramento, California 95812-3044

FROM: San Joaquin County  
Community Development Department  
1810 East Hazelton Avenue  
Stockton, California 95205

County Clerk, County of San Joaquin

**Project Title:** Site Approval No. PA-1900132

**Project Location - Specific:** The project site is on the south side of East Carpenter Road, 475 feet east of South Pock Road, near the City of Stockton (APN 179-140-18, Address 2482 E. Carpenter Road, Stockton); additional off-site work is located at PG&E's Weber Substation (APN 149-140-22, Address 3724 Pock Lane, Stockton), and an approximately one-mile length of PG&E transmission line right-of-way along the southern right-of-way of East Hazelton Avenue between B Street to the east and El Dorado Street to the west, in the City of Stockton (multiple APNs); Supervisorial District 1.

**Project Location – City:** Unincorporated San Joaquin County & City of Stockton

**Project Location – County:** San Joaquin County

**Project Description:** Site Approval application for a remotely operated and monitored 25 MW / 100 MWh battery energy storage system (BESS) facility located on approximately 2.2 acres of a 4.76-acre parcel in unincorporated San Joaquin County, adjacent to the city of Stockton. The Project will establish an unmanned, 25 megawatt (MW) battery energy storage system facility utilizing 2.2 acres of a 4.76-acre parcel to include 38 storage containers totaling 12,160 square-feet to house battery storage racks for lithium batteries, 1 auxiliary battery storage container, 16 inverters/transformers totaling 1,920 square-feet to convert between AC and DC and to step up the voltage, and 1 site substation totaling 5,940 square-feet. The Project includes accessory equipment including inverters, switchgear, telecommunications equipment, and an approximately 120-square-foot spare parts enclosure; an ancillary project substation; a 15,000- gallon water tank for fire protection; access roads and parking area, pads for battery cabinets and accessory equipment; underground wires and cabling connecting the batteries to the Project substation; and perimeter fencing. The battery cabinets, accessory equipment, water tank, and project substation are non-habitable, small structures with a total footprint of approximately 20,565 square-feet.

A new 60 kV generation interconnection transmission line (gen-tie) on a new, approximately 70-foot-high monopole would connect the BESS to PG&E Weber Substation on the adjacent parcel to the west. Fiber optic cables would also be installed underground to provide a telecommunications connection between the Project site and the PG&E facilities. PG&E would also reconductor approximately one-mile of existing 60-kV power line in the city of Stockton near the Project site, replacing existing conductors and replacing wood support poles with light-duty steel poles at a similar heights (40-feet above street level) within the existing alignment.

The Property is zoned AU-20 (Agriculture-Urban Reserve, 20-acre minimum) and the General Plan designation is R/L (Low Density Residential).

**Project Proponent(s):** Estrella L. Jose Family, LP / Cascade Energy Storage, LLC

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** San Joaquin County Community Development Department

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Giuseppe Sanfilippo, Associate Planner  
San Joaquin County  
Community Development Department

**Exemption Status:**

Categorical Exemptions: Class 1 – Existing Facilities (§ 15301), Class 2 – Replacement or Reconstruction (§ 15302), Class 3 – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (§ 15303), and Class 4 – Minor Alterations to Land (§ 15304)

**Exemption Reasons:**

The proposed project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 [Existing Structures], 15302 [Replacement or Reconstruction], 15303 [New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures], and 15304 [Minor Alterations to Land].

Section 15303 exempts the construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures and the installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures. The battery cabinets, accessory equipment, water tank, and Project substation are non-habitable, small structures with a total footprint of approximately 20,565 square-feet. While the Section 15303 categorical exemption does not specifically address battery energy storage facilities in the listed examples, the total footprint of the Project is less than the maximum allowable for habitable commercial structures on a legal parcel in an urbanized area (i.e., up to for commercial buildings not exceeding 10,000 square-feet or 40,000 square-feet total). The Project will not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances, all necessary public services and facilities are available, and the Project site and surrounding area are not environmentally sensitive. Section 15303(d) exempts electrical and other utility extensions of reasonable length to serve new, small structures and applies to the gen-tie line connecting the Project substation to the PG&E substation, which would span approximately 100 feet and be mounted on one new approximately 70-foot-tall monopole on the Project site, and fiber optic cables for telecommunications installed underground to connect the Project site to the immediately-adjacent PG&E substation. Section 15303(e) exempts accessory (appurtenant) structures and applies to water storage tanks, electrical equipment, Project substation, and perimeter fencing are all accessory or appurtenant to the primary battery energy storage use.

Section 15304 exempts minor alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, including grading on land with a slope of less than 10 percent pursuant to the example provided in Section 15304(a), and minor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored pursuant to Section 15304(f). This exemption applies to the removal of nine non-native trees to allow widening of an access driveway. The trees are located on private property in an urbanized area, along a private access drive, and are not near any designated scenic routes. The trees are not scenic and their removal does not conflict with any applicable zoning or other regulations governing scenic quality.

Sections 15301 and 15302 apply to PG&E's reconductoring of an approximately one-mile segment of existing 60 kV power line located in the city of Stockton near the Project site. Section 15301 exempts the operation, repair, and maintenance of existing structures, facilities, and mechanic equipment where there is negligible or no expansion of use including, pursuant to Section 15301(b), existing facilities of investor and publicly owned utilities used to provide electric power. Section 15302 exempts the replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities located on the same site as the structure replaced and for substantially the same purpose and capacity. The reconductoring consists of replacement of existing conductors and replacement of existing wood support poles with light-duty steel poles within the existing alignment, which generally extends along the southern right-of-way of East Hazelton Avenue between B Street to the east and El Dorado Street/PG&E's Stockton A Substation to the west. The recondored transmission line would look substantially similar to the existing transmission line and be mounted on poles at a similar height. It would continue to provide electrical service to the surrounding area with no change in capacity or area served.

The Project does not involve unusual circumstances, including future activities, resulting in or which might reasonably result in significant impacts which threaten the environment. The exceptions to the categorical exemptions pursuant to Section 15300.2 of the State CEQA Guidelines are:

*Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.*

*Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.*

**(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environmental be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply to all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.**

The Project site has been previously disked and primarily contains non-native grasses and weeds and several non-native perimeter trees. No potential aquatic plants/features or special status species have been identified on the site. The Project applicant will participate in the San Joaquin County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation and Open Space Plan (SJMSCP) for improvements on the Project. Participation in this plan includes the implementation of applicable avoidance and minimization measures to ensure significant impacts sensitive biological resources are avoided.

Further, with regard to the PG&E Weber Substation and reconductoring portion of the Project, no evidence of sensitive species exist within the areas of work. PG&E will perform the work in accordance with its most current San Joaquin Valley Operations and Maintenance Habitat Conservation Plan, which includes pre-construction nesting bird surveys if work will occur during the nesting bird season. Accordingly, PG&E's portion of the Project will avoid any potential for unusual impacts to sensitive environmental resources to occur. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

**(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type, in the same place over time is significant.**

The nature of battery energy storage projects is to provide local energy storage serving the surrounding community. As such, there is finite demand for such facilities to be located within the same geographic area such that there would not be a proliferation of such facilities in the same place. Therefore, battery projects that do not result in potentially significant project-level impacts would also typically not have the potential for cumulatively significant impacts resulting from the Project combined with other existing or potential battery energy storage projects in the surrounding area. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

**(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.**

There are no unusual circumstances surrounding the Project site or areas of off-site improvements that differ from other BESS projects. Accordingly, there are no unusual circumstances that would lead to the conclusion that there is a reasonable possibility that the Project will have a significant effect on the environment.

The Project site and off-site improvement locations are in urban areas that have been previously disturbed and contain no sensitive environmental resources. The Project would be remotely operated and monitored with only occasional visits by personnel to the Project site. The Project is designed to avoid all potentially significant impacts. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

**(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.**

The Project site is not located near and does not adversely impact any scenic resources within an officially designated state scenic highway. Therefore, this exception does not apply.

