

**To:** Office of Planning and Research  
 PO Box 3044  
 1400 Tenth Street, Room 113  
 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

**From:** California Energy Commission  
 1516 Ninth Street, MS-48  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

**Project Applicant:** Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

**Project Title:** Energy-Water Desalination Hub

**Project Location – Specific:** Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory at 1 Cyclotron Road, Berkeley, California, and numerous locations in California and the United States, to be determined

**Project Location – City:** Berkeley, CA 94720

**Project Location – County:** Alameda

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:**

Under grant Agreement EPC-20-001, the California Energy Commission will provide a \$3,000,000 grant to Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory as a cost-share grant toward the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) more than \$100,000,000 Energy-Water Desalination Program. Under the Program, government and university laboratories and some private research institutions would apply for research funding for development of energy-efficient and cost-competitive desalination technologies and for treating nontraditional water sources. A consortium of national laboratories, universities, and private institutions, called the National Alliance for Water Innovation (NAWI), led by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL), is to administer the program across the nation. LBNL would coordinate efforts, including NAWI’s reviewing, awarding, and overseeing funded research. The Program will be organized into four topic areas: Materials and Manufacturing Research and Development (R&D), Process Innovation and Intensification R&D, Modeling and Simulation R&D, and Integrated Data and Analysis.

Beneficiaries will include customers who eventually receive desalinated water; California’s electric utilities and their customers (i.e., ratepayers); along with the public at large and the environment. Ratepayer benefits include reduced electricity costs to pump water long distances.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** California Energy Commission

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (a U.S. Department of Energy National Laboratory managed by the University of California)

**Exempt Status:** *(check one)*

- Ministerial Exemption (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(1); Cal. Code Regs., tit 14, § 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(3); Cal. Code Regs., tit 14, § 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(4); Cal. Code Regs., tit 14, § 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number  
Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15301; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15306
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number.
- Common Sense Exemption. (Cal. Code Regs., tit 14, §15061(b)(3))

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.  
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

Regarding the Energy-Water Desalination Program, DOE prepared a Categorical Exclusion Determination, dated 1/7/2020, under the National Environmental Policy Act. DOE’s analysis took into account restrictions on Program activities, including, but not limited to: (a) research by qualified scientific staff; (b) all legal and regulatory requirements regarding environmental, health, and safety to be met; (c) activities to be indoors and in existing laboratory and research facilities; (d) no funding of large-scale “demonstration” activities; and (e) no support for the construction of new facilities or the expansion of existing facilities.

Turning to the grant recipient, in addition to many other locations to be determined, research will occur at LBNL. This will include paper and desktop computer studies in office and/or lab/office space and small-scale laboratory research in existing, appropriately outfitted lab space.

LBNL prepared an internal evaluation under the California Environmental Quality Act, dated 12/23/2019, and concluded that the proposed project is exempt under Sections 15301 and 15306 of CEQA regulations. LBNL relied upon similar reasoning to DOE, including that LBNL would ensure that future funded activities meet the research conditions through “flow-through” requirements in the application process and in contracts with funding awardees.

The CEC’s co-funding of the Program will be \$3 million through the EPC-20-001 grant. The CEC has independently reviewed the project’s environmental aspects. The project consists of the operation of existing public or private facilities, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. Therefore, this project is exempt under California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15301, Existing Facilities. In addition, the project involves data collection, research, and experiments, which would not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. Therefore, this project is exempt under California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15306, Information Collection.

**Lead Agency**

**Contact Person:** Christian Fredericks **Area code/Telephone/Ext:** 916-327-1631

**If filed by applicant:**

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  Yes  No

**Signature:** Christian Fredericks **Date:** 12/31/2020 **Title:** Mechanical Engineer

**Signed by Responsible Agency**

**Signed by Lead Agency**

**Signed by Applicant**

**Date received for filing at OPR:** \_\_\_\_\_