

State of California
Natural Resources Agency / Department of Conservation
GEOLOGIC ENERGY MANAGEMENT DIVISION

California Environmental Quality Act
Notice of Exemption

To: Office of Planning & Research
State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Department of Conservation
715 P Street, MS 1803
Sacramento, CA 95814

Contact: CEQA@conservation.ca.gov

Project Title: 591034_SoCalGas_UGS

Project Applicant: Southern California Gas Company

Project Location: Los Angeles County, Aliso Canyon Gas Field
Latitude 34.31237793, Longitude -118.55036926

Project Description: Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) submitted a Notice of Intention (NOI) to plug and abandon an existing underground gas storage (UGS) well at the Aliso Canyon Gas Storage Facility (Aliso Canyon Facility) in Los Angeles County (Project).

The well that will be plugged and abandoned is part of the Aliso Canyon Facility, an existing facility of an investor-owned utility that is used to provide natural gas services. The proposed Project is located at the Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Field in northwest San Fernando Valley, north of Porter Ranch, Los Angeles County, California. The Aliso Canyon field began as an oil field in 1939 before being converted to gas storage in the early 1970s by SoCalGas. It is the largest natural gas storage facility in California, with a (current) maximum allowable inventory of 68.6 billion cubic feet of natural gas.

The purpose of the proposed Project is to plug and abandon a UGS well. Activities include pulling completion string, clean to total depth, lay cement from total depth to surface, set mechanical barriers where applicable, perform regulatory cement tags, critical zone remediation as proposed, witness bubble test at surface, weld identification plate, and restore location to ensure compliance with revised regulations (14 CCR § 1726 et seq.) to enhance the safety of UGS projects.

In 2018, CalGEM promulgated regulations that establish standards for the design, construction, and maintenance of all gas storage wells. The regulations include stringent well construction standards that are required to ensure that gas storage wells are safe and will maintain their integrity over time. The well construction standards promote environmental safety by focusing on leak prevention.

The proposed Project consists of CalGEM approving one permit for SoCalGas to plug and abandon the UGS well listed below, in the Aliso Canyon Gas Field.

API # 0403721354, **Well Name:** Porter 32F

Exempt Status: As the Lead Agency, CalGEM has determined that the proposed Project is exempt from full environmental review requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to the specified exemptions marked in the section below. CalGEM further finds that the proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse impact to the environment and that none of the exceptions to the application of the exemptions apply (14 CCR § 15300.2).

Exemption Type		Statute (PRC)	Regulation (14 CCR)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Statutory Exemption:			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing Project (<i>pre-CEQA approval on April 5, 1973</i>)	21169	15261 (b)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ministerial	21080 (b)(1)	15268	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Declared Emergency	21080 (b)(3)	15269 (a)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency Projects	21080 (b)(4)	15269 (b) or (c)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Categorical Exemption:	21084		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Class 1: Existing Facilities		15301	1684.1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Class 2: Replacement or Reconstruction		15302	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Class 3: New Construction/Conversion of Small Structures		15303	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land		15304	1684.2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Class 7: Protection of Natural Resources		15307	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Class 8: Protection of the Environment		15308	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Class 11: Accessory Structures		15311	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Class 21: Enforcement Actions to revoke a permit		15321	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Class 30: Minor Actions to Prevent, Minimize, Stabilize, Mitigate, or Eliminate a Release (Actual or Threat) of Hazardous Substances (Waste or Material)		15330	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Class 33: Small Habitat Restoration Projects		15333	
<input type="checkbox"/>	General Exemption ("common sense")		15061 (b)(3)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not a "Project" subject to CEQA		15378 (b)(2)	

CEQA Exceptions to the Exemptions (14 CCR § 15300.2): where project is located (e.g., sensitive environment); Cumulative Impact; Significant Effect due to Unusual Circumstances; Scenic Highways; Hazardous Waste Sites; Historical Resources.

Reasons Why Project is Exempt: The basis for CalGEM’s determination that the Project is exempt from the requirements of CEQA is provided in the brief explanation below.

Class 1, Existing Facilities (14 CCR §§ 15301, 1684.1): Class 1 exemption applies as CalGEM’s regulations state: “Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing previously. The Class includes, but is not limited to: remedial, maintenance, conversion, and abandonment work on oil, gas, injection, and geothermal wells. This plugging and abandonment of this well involves pulling completion string, clean to total depth, lay cement from total depth to surface, set mechanical barriers where applicable, perform regulatory cement tags, critical zone remediation as proposed, witness bubble test at surface, weld identification plate, and restore

location. The plugging and abandoning of the well does not expand the well's existing or former use. Rather, the well will cease to be used.

Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction (14 CCR § 15302): Class 2 exemption applies because it consists of "replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced[.]" Examples of Class 2 include, but are not limited to, "Replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity." The proposed Project is the plugging and abandoning of a well. The plugging and abandoning will be on an existing well pad, utilize the upper portion of the well, and no additional construction will occur.

Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land (14 CCR §§ 15304, 1684.2): Class 4 exemption applies. The proposed Project would be conducted entirely on an existing pad, and when combined with existing roads, has enough space to contain all equipment. The Project would not disturb any undisturbed areas. The proposed Project is located within an industrial area. Therefore, the proposed Project "consists of drilling operations that result in only minor alterations with negligible or no permanent effects to the existing condition of the land, water, air, and/or vegetation." The plugging and abandoning of the well does not expand the well's existing or former use.

Classes 7 and 8, Protection of Natural Resources and the Environment (14 CCR §§ 15307, 15308): Class 7 and Class 8 exemptions apply. The exemptions are for actions taken by regulatory agencies as authorized by law to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of a natural resource or the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the protection of the environment." As demonstrated in the record, the plugging and abandoning of the well does not expand the well's existing or former use. Rather, the well will cease to be used. Furthermore, the plugging and abandonment of the well will restore the location to ensure compliance with revised regulations (14 CCR § 1726 et seq.) to enhance the safety of UGS projects, thereby maintenance, restoration, enhancement, and/or protection of a natural resource and the environment.

Exceptions to Exemptions: CalGEM further finds that there are no exceptions to the application of the categorical exemptions (PRC § 21084; 14 CCR § 15300.2(c)) referenced above. There is no substantial evidence that there are any "unusual circumstances" associated with the proposed Project that create a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment, and that there are no significant "cumulative impacts" resulting from successive projects of the same type in the same place. Therefore, reliance on the exemptions is appropriate.

Consistent with the purposes of PRC § 3250 et seq. and the documentation available for the preliminary review, the proposed Project will benefit the environment. In addition, the work under the contracts and any resulting impacts will be temporary in duration. Therefore, the Project can be considered exempt from the need for full CEQA review.

Department of Conservation

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A copy of this NOE (as required by 14 CCR § 15062(a)) and all other related materials can be made available to the public by contacting the CalGEM CEQA Program, located at 715 P Street, MS 1803, Sacramento, CA 95814-3530; by calling (916) 445-9686; or an electronic copy of these documents may be requested by contacting CEQA@conservation.ca.gov. A copy of this NOE also may be accessed online at the State Clearinghouse: <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov>.

Certified: Jan Perez

Date: 7/19/2024

Department of Conservation,
Geologic Energy Management Division
CEQA Program