

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

## California Environmental Quality Act Notice of Exemption

**To:** Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation  
 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:** 502874\_Aera\_OG\_UIC

**Project Applicant:** Aera Energy LLC

**Project Location:** Kern County, South Belridge Oil Field; 34/28S/21E/MD; Latitude 35.45234680, Longitude -119.70718384

**Project Description:** The project would sidetrack one oil and gas production well into the Tulare production zone. The well would be deepened from total depth (TD) 438' to 950'. Work includes cleaning out the well, setting the abandonment cement plug, cutting and recovering all casing strings, installing new conductor and casing, drilling the sidetrack, cementing casing, and gravel packing slots. There will be no expansion of the existing well pads, roads, staging areas, or pipelines. No new grading would occur in any undisturbed areas. No new road construction or improvements would be required for the proposed project. Routine maintenance activities at the site would include removal of weeds and other ruderal vegetation for fire control and road maintenance.

The proposed project consists of the California Department of Conservation, Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) approving one permit for Aera Energy LLC to rework the well listed below, in the South Belridge Oil Field.

API #	Well Name
0403003809	DTR 12RAA-34

**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, or that any of the exceptions to the application of the exemptions apply (14 CCR § 15300.2).

Exemption Type		Statute (PRC)	Regulation (14 CCR)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Statutory Exemption:</b>			
<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"/>	<b>Categorical Exemption:</b>	21084		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 1:</b> Existing Facilities		15301	1684.1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 2:</b> Replacement or Reconstruction		15302	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 3:</b> New Construction/Conversion of Small Structures		15303	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 4:</b> Minor Alterations to Land		15304	1684.2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 7:</b> Protection of Natural Resources		15307	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 8:</b> Protection of the Environment		15308	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 11:</b> Accessory Structures		15311	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 21:</b> Enforcement Actions to revoke a permit		15321	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 30:</b> Minor Actions to Prevent, Minimize, Stabilize, Mitigate, or Eliminate a Release (Actual or Threat) of Hazardous Substances (Waste or Material)		15330	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Class 33:</b> Small Habitat Restoration Projects		15333	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>General Exemption</b> ("common sense")		15061 (b)(3)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Not a "Project" subject to CEQA</b>		15378 (b)(2)	
<p><b>CEQA Exceptions to the Exemptions (14 CCR § 15300.2):</b> where project is located (e.g., sensitive environment); Cumulative Impact; Significant Effect due to Unusual Circumstances; Scenic Highways; Hazardous Waste Sites; Historical Resources.</p>				

**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):**

The proposed project is exempt under the Class 1, Existing Facilities exemption because it would make minor alterations to an existing well involving negligible change in use. 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." (14 CCR § 1684.1.) The proposed project would sidetrack an existing oil and gas production well. The well would recomplete in the same zone and would remain an oil and gas well with substantially the same production capacity. A CalGEM engineer has confirmed that the proposed work is within the scope of UIC project 05200010, and the project would be a continuation of operations as permitted by the PAL. The work would deepen the total depth of the well, however the well is completed in the Tulare zone and would complete

in the same zone. The Tulare zone is a known hydrocarbon zone that is currently in production. Therefore, any modifications to the existing use would be negligible.

**Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction (14 CCR § 15302):**

The proposed project is exempt under the Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction exemption because it would reconstruct the wellbore of an existing well in order to sidetrack. Class 2 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[.]" (14 CCR § 15302.) The project work includes cleaning out the well, setting the abandonment cement plug, cutting and recovering all casing strings, installing new conductor and casing, drilling the sidetrack, cementing casing, and gravel packing slots. The project would take place on an existing well pad. The well would recomplete in the same zone and would remain an oil and gas well with substantially the same production capacity. A CalGEM engineer has confirmed that the proposed work is within the scope of UIC project 05200010, and the project would be a continuation of operations as permitted by the PAL. The work would deepen the total depth of the well, however the well is completed in the Tulare zone and would complete in the same zone. The Tulare zone is a known hydrocarbon zone that is currently in production. Therefore, any modifications to the existing use would be negligible.

**Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land (14 CCR §§ 15304, 1684.2):**

The proposed project is exempt under the Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land exemption because it would involve minimal surface disturbance that could significantly impact the surrounding environment. Class 4 consists of "drilling operations that result only in minor alterations with negligible or no permanent effects to the existing condition of the land, water, air, and/or vegetation." (14 CCR § 1684.2; see also 14 CCR § 15304.) The project would take place on an existing well pad which is large enough to accommodate the necessary equipment and can be accessed by existing roads. The project would not require the expansion of existing well pads, roads, staging areas, or pipelines. No new grading would occur in any undisturbed areas. No new road construction or improvements would be required for the proposed project. The project includes routine maintenance activities at the site involving the removal of weeds and other ruderal vegetation for fire control and road maintenance, however this would take place on previously disturbed areas in a developed oil field.

**Exceptions to Exemptions:** CalGEM further finds that there are no exceptions to the application of the categorical exemptions (PRC § 21084; 14 CCR § 15300.2) referenced above. For example, 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.

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; by calling (916) 445-9686; or an electronic copy of these documents may be requested by contacting

