

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 and 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: 667265_Group_Aera_UIC

Project Applicant: Aera Energy LLC (Aera)

Project Location: Kern County, South Belridge Oil Field; 19/28S/21E/MD;
 35.47704315, -119.75082397

Project Description: Aera proposes to sidetrack 2 existing cyclic steam wells to restore to original functionality. The work is designed to support the continuation of oil and gas resource development in the area. The project includes partial abandonment of the existing damaged wellbores, sidetrack drilling and subsurface completion of the wells in accordance with California Department of Conservation, Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) regulations, and re-installation of various aboveground piping and equipment to connect the well sites to the existing infrastructure. The wells will operate within the existing completion zone and continue to operate consistent with past and current use.

The proposed project consists of CalGEM approving 2 permits for Aera to perform sidetrack work on the wells listed below, in the South Belridge Oil Field, to address well integrity issues.

API #	Well Name
0403006929	Ellis 1-2R-19
0402984047	Ellis 1-3R-19

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"/> Statutory Exemption: <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing Project (<i>pre-CEQA approval on April 5, 1973</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Ministerial <input type="checkbox"/> Declared Emergency <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Projects <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Categorical Exemption: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Class 1: Existing Facilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Class 2: Replacement or Reconstruction <input type="checkbox"/> Class 3: New Construction/Conversion of Small Structures <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Class 4: Minor Alterations to Land <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Class 7: Protection of Natural Resources <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Class 8: Protection of the Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Class 11: Accessory Structures <input type="checkbox"/> Class 21: Enforcement Actions to revoke a permit <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) <input type="checkbox"/> Class 33: Small Habitat Restoration Projects <input type="checkbox"/> General Exemption ("common sense")	21169 21080 (b)(1) 21080 (b)(3) 21080 (b)(4) 21084	15261 (b) 15268 15269 (a) 15269 (b) or (c) 15301 15302 15303 15304 15307 15308 15311 15321 15330 15333 15061 (b)(3)	1684.1 1684.2
<input type="checkbox"/> Not a "Project" subject to CEQA		15378 (b)(2)	
<p>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.</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 "Class 1" (14 CCR § 15301) exemption is applicable per the CEQA Guidelines and CalGEM's regulations (14 CCR § 1684.1) because the proposed work consists of repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing previously permitted wells involving no expansion of former use. The Class includes, but is not limited to: remedial, maintenance, conversion, and abandonment work on oil, gas, injection, and geothermal wells. The wells would maintain their existing well type, cyclic steam, and the use of the wells would remain the same as before.

Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction (14 CCR § 15302): Class 2 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 sidetrack, or replacement, of the existing wellbores which is needed to restore the wells to original functionality. The sidetracked wells will be located on the same site and would have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the wells did before the sidetrack. Additionally, 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 existing pads with 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 sidetracks would not expand the facility.

Classes 7 and 8, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for 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 sidetracks involve remedial/rework activities to address well integrity issues that require swift action for protection of natural resources 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) 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 CEQA@conservation.ca.gov. The notice filed with the State Clearinghouse may be accessed online at: <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov>

Certified: _____

*Nicole Trezza*Date: 5/1/2025

Department of Conservation,
Geologic Energy Management Division