

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:** 668323\_Group\_PG&E\_UGS

**Project Applicant:** Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)

**Project Location:** San Joaquin County, McDonald Island Gas Field; 25/02N/04E/MD;  
 Latitude 37.995806, Longitude -121.477417

**Project Description:** The proposed project would drill four new gas storage wells. The proposed work includes directional drilling to the bottom hole location approximately 5400 feet below surface. New casing would be installed and cemented to surface. Wellheads, production liners, gravel packs, tubing strings, and packers would be installed. All equipment would be staged and operated within the existing facility footprint and existing roadways would be used for access. This includes all ancillary equipment which may be required such as pump trucks, vac trucks, and casing storage. No new permanent facilities will be constructed, and no expansion of associated facilities or roadways will be required.

The proposed project consists of the California Department of Conservation, Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) approving four permits for Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) to drill the wells listed below, in the McDonald Island Gas Field.

API #	Well Name
N/A	Whiskey Slough 15E
N/A	Whiskey Slough 16E
N/A	Whiskey Slough 17E
N/A	Whiskey Slough 18E

**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 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):**

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.) This includes "publicly-owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage, or other public utility services." (14 CCR 15301 (b).) The proposed project would drill four gas storage wells in the existing McDonald Island Gas Storage facility. These are minor alterations to the facility in order to continue to provide public utility services. A CalGEM engineer has confirmed that the proposed work is within the scope of the approved UGS project 45200001. The wells would not change the existing use of

the gas storage facility and would not substantially increase gas injection or withdrawal rates.

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

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 proposed project involves minor alterations to the surrounding environment. The project would not require the construction of new facilities or the expansion of existing facilities. The four wells would be drilled on an existing well pad that can be accessed by existing roads. The well pad area is 11 acres and is large enough to accommodate the necessary equipment. Therefore, there would be no significant surface disturbance that could impact the surrounding 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](mailto:CEQA@conservation.ca.gov). The notice filed with the State Clearinghouse may be accessed online at: <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov>

**Certified:** \_\_\_\_\_ *Mikayla Vaba* \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** 5/5/2025  
Department of Conservation,  
Geologic Energy Management Division