

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:** 637476\_CREH\_OG\_UIC

**Project Applicant:** California Resources Elk Hills, LLC (CREH)

**Project Location:** Kern County, Buena Vista Oil Field; 31/31S/24E/MD;  
 35.18152618, -119.44169617

**Project Description:** California Resources Elk Hills, LLC (CREH) proposes to sidetrack one existing oil & gas well 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 wellbore, sidetrack drilling and subsurface completion of the well 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 site to the existing infrastructure. The well would operate within the existing completion zone and continue to operate consistent with past and current use. There would be no expansion of the existing well pad, roads, staging areas, or pipelines. No new grading would occur in any undisturbed areas.

The proposed project consists of CalGEM approving a permit for CREH to sidetrack the well listed below, in the Buena Vista Oil Field in Kern County.

API #	Well Name
0403044238	638X-31G

**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> ) <input type="checkbox"/> Ministerial <input type="checkbox"/> Declared Emergency <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Projects  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Categorical Exemption:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 1:</b> Existing Facilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 2:</b> Replacement or Reconstruction <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 3:</b> New Construction/Conversion of Small Structures <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 4:</b> Minor Alterations to Land <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 7:</b> Protection of Natural Resources <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 8:</b> Protection of the Environment <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 11:</b> Accessory Structures <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 21:</b> Enforcement Actions to revoke a permit <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) <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Class 33:</b> Small Habitat Restoration Projects  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>General Exemption</b> ("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  15061 (b)(3)	1684.1    1684.2
<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 project is exempt under the Class 1, Existing Facilities exemption because the project would make minor changes to an existing well involving no expansion of the existing use of the well. Class 1 exemption consists of operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alternation of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing previously. This includes "alteration of well casing, such as perforating and casing repair, removal or replacement; installation or removal of downhole production or injection equipment, cement plugs, bridge plugs, and packers set to isolate production or injection intervals." (14 CCR § 1684.1.) The project consists of sidetracking one existing oil & gas well and returning the well to production. No expansion of the existing well pad, roads, staging areas, or pipelines are proposed. According to a CalGEM engineer, the proposed work

is within the scope of UIC project 08006009 and would be a continuation of operations within the confines of the UIC project as permitted by the project approval letter (PAL). Therefore, the proposed project would not change the existing facilities and would not expand the existing use.

**Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction (14 CCR § 15302):** Class 2 exemption applies because it consists of the “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, “[r]eplacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity.” (14 CCR § 15302.) The proposed project is the sidetrack, or replacement, of the existing wellbore which is needed to restore the well to original functionality. According to a CalGEM engineer, the proposed work is within the scope of UIC project 08006009 and would be a continuation of operations within the confines of the UIC project as permitted by the PAL. Therefore, the proposed project would consist of sidetrack work on the same site and would not change the capacity of the well.

**Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land (14 CCR §§ 15304, 1684.2):** Class 4 exemption applies. 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 sidetrack work would be conducted entirely on an existing pad, and no expansion of the existing well pad, roads, staging areas, or pipelines are proposed. The proposed project is located within a developed oil field. Therefore, the proposed project would result in only minor alterations with negligible or no permanent effects to the existing condition of the land, water, air, and/or vegetation.

**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:**

*Nicole Trezza*

**Date:** 5/7/2025

Department of Conservation,  
Geologic Energy Management Division