

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: 637496_Group_CREH_OG

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

Project Location: Kern, Buena Vista Oil Field; 09/32S/24E/MD; Latitude 35.16029358,
Longitude -119.40782166

Project Description: The proposed project would sidetrack and deepen four oil and gas production wells to continue resource development in the Buena Vista oil field. The proposed work includes placing abandonment cement plugs, perforating casing, installing new conductors, drilling, and cementing casing. The wells are completed in the Antelope Shale-West Dome formation and would complete in the same formation. The Antelope formation is a known hydrocarbon zone that is currently in production. There would 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 expansions 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 four permits for California Resources Elk Hills, LLC to perform sidetrack work on the wells listed below, in the Buena Vista Oil Field.

API #	Well Name
Unspecified 523-9D	0402964500
Unspecified 553-27B	0402901950
Unspecified 624X-5D	0403046410
Unspecified 636H-25B	0403044014

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>)	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 type="checkbox"/>	Class 7: Protection of Natural Resources		15307	
<input 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)	
<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 an existing previously permitted well 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 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 continue resource development. The sidetracked wells will be located on the same sites and would have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the wells did before the sidetracks. 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 a densely developed oil field. 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. The proposed project and related approval would be consistent with the laws that govern the operations, including statutory and regulatory provisions that protect public health, safety, 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:

Mikayla Vaba

Date:

5/12/2025

Department of Conservation,
Geologic Energy Management Division