

To: Office of Planning and Research
PO Box 3044
1400 Tenth Street, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: California Energy Commission
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Project Applicant: Cal Poly Humboldt Sponsored Programs Foundation

Project Title: Blue Lake Rancheria Nested Community Microgrids

Project Location – Specific: 1 Aiyekwee Loop

Project Location – City: Blue Lake, 95525

Project Location – County: Humboldt

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The proposed project involves the expansion and reconfiguration of the existing renewable energy microgrid at the Blue Lake Rancheria, including the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, battery energy storage systems (BESS), control systems, and limited trenching and electrical infrastructure upgrades. All work will occur entirely on lands owned and governed by the Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe, a federally recognized sovereign Tribal government. The proposed project will develop and prove nested community microgrids that are used to coordinate operations of distributed energy resources across a distribution circuit by integrating new hardware and control systems into the existing microgrid system developed in a previous California Energy Commission funded project in 2015. The proposed project will demonstrate significant advancements in the state-of-the-art in grid modernization by deploying an automated, self-balancing, deeply decarbonized and resilient electrical distribution circuit serving multiple facilities with the ability to island strategic sections of a nested system.

These advances will be demonstrated and documented, with a focus on facilitating replication for front-of-the-meter community microgrids throughout the state. These advances are expected to lead to carbon emissions reductions, improved reliability and resilience, increased energy security, enhanced safety, increased hosting capacity on distribution circuits, and more cost-effective approaches to wildfire mitigation, especially for disadvantaged, remote, and rural communities, including Tribal nations. Microgrids that are built using technology demonstrated under the proposed project will enable significant improvements in service on rural distribution circuits where electrical service is unreliable. This project will support lower cost, more reliable, and cleaner electricity for a historically disadvantaged Tribal community, along with laying the technical groundwork for other projects.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: California Energy Commission

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Cal Poly Humboldt Sponsored Programs Foundation

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial Exemption (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(1); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(3); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Pub. Resources Code § 21080(b)(4); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number

Statutory Exemptions. State code number.

Common Sense Exemption. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15061(b)(3))

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Reasons why project is exempt:

This project is covered by the Common Sense Exemption under 14 CCR 15061 (b) (3) that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

The proposed project involves the expansion and reconfiguration of the existing renewable energy microgrid at the Blue Lake Rancheria, including the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, battery energy storage systems (BESS), control systems, and limited trenching and electrical infrastructure upgrades. All work will occur entirely on lands owned and governed by the Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe, a federally recognized sovereign Tribal government. The proposed project will develop and prove nested community microgrids that are used to coordinate operations of distributed energy resources across a distribution circuit by integrating new hardware and control systems into the existing microgrid system developed in a previous California Energy Commission funded project in 2015. The proposed project will demonstrate significant advancements in the state-of-the-art in grid modernization by deploying an automated, self-balancing, deeply decarbonized and resilient electrical distribution circuit serving multiple facilities with the ability to island strategic sections of a nested system.

All project activities will occur on the Blue Lake Rancheria reservation. Project activities do not include burning or any other activity that may have an impact to land off of the Blue Lake Rancheria. In order for the CEC to comply with CEQA, the CEC must evaluate any impacts to land within the jurisdiction of the State of California, which is therefore limited to potential impacts of the project off of the Blue Lake Rancheria.

This project is exempt under the CEQA exemption because the proposed project will not:

- construct on or alter any land subject to jurisdiction of the State of California;
- impact local air quality;
- use groundwater resources or otherwise impact any water resources that might be subject to jurisdiction of the State of California
- build additional transportation infrastructure;
- increase vehicle miles traveled;
- increase ambient noise beyond the existing activities; or
- degrade the visual character or quality of views, including those of scenic resources or objects of aesthetic significance on land subject to the jurisdiction of the State of California.

Because the proposed project does not provide for any physical changes outside of the Blue Lake Rancheria reservation, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment within the jurisdiction of the State of California. Based on all these factors, the proposed project meets the CEQA exemption.

The project will not impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies; does not involve any cumulative impacts of successive projects of the same type in the same place that might be considered significant; does not involve unusual circumstances that might have a significant effect on the environment; will not result in damage to scenic resources within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway; the project site is not included on any list compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5; and the project will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Therefore, none of the exceptions to categorical exemptions listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 apply to this project and this project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

The activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code. Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Sean Anayah **Area code/Telephone/Ext:** 916-931-5044

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: Sean Anayah

Date: 6/18/2025

Title: EGSS1

Signed by Responsible Agency

Signed by Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant

Date received for filing at OPR: _____