DOCKETED			
Docket Number:	21-AFC-02		
Project Title:	Willow Rock Energy Storage Center		
TN #:	264853		
Document Title:	NOTICE OF PREHEARING CONFERENCE AND EVIDENTIARY HEARING, FIFTH REVISED SCHEDULING ORDER, AND FURTHER ORDERS		
Description:	Committee's Notice of Prehearing Conference and Evidentiary Hearing including instructions to the Parties and instructions for public attendance and participation in the proceedings		
Filer:	Renee Webster-Hawkins		
Organization:	California Energy Commission		
Submitter Role:	Hearing Office		
Submission Date:	7/17/2025 9:02:46 AM		
Docketed Date:	7/17/2025		

STATE OF CALIFORNIA — NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

Gavin Newsom, Governor

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

715 P Street Sacramento, California 95814

energy.ca.gov CEC-70 (Revised 7/22)

IN THE MATTER OF:

Willow Rock Energy Storage Center



Docket No. 21-AFC-02

NOTICE OF PREHEARING CONFERENCE AND EVIDENTIARY HEARING, FIFTH REVISED SCHEDULING ORDER, AND FURTHER ORDERS

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the California Energy Commission (CEC) Committee¹ assigned to conduct proceedings on the Application for Certification (AFC, or application) for the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center (Willow Rock, or proposed project) has scheduled a public Prehearing Conference and a public Evidentiary Hearing as follows:

The **PREHEARING CONFERENCE** will be conducted remotely on:

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 2025 Start Time 10:00 a.m. – End Time 12:00 p.m. Remote Access Only via ZOOM

The **EVIDENTIARY HEARING** will be conducted in person and remotely via Zoom on:

THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 2025 and FRIDAY, AUGUST 22, 2025, if needed Start Time 10:00 a.m. each day — End time 5:00 p.m. each day MOJAVE AIR & SPACE PORT/Stuart O. Witt Event Center

1247 Poole Street Mojave, CA 93501

Remote Access for the public is available via ZOOM

¹ On March 10, 2023, the CEC amended its designation of a committee consisting of Andrew McAllister, Commissioner and Presiding Member, and Noemí Gallardo, Commissioner and Associate Member, to preside over any proceedings arising from the Application. (TN 249087.) This and all other documents related to this proceeding may be found in the online_docket at https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=21-AFC-02.

Zoom links for both events are provided in the Attendance Instructions below. Spanish interpretation will be provided at both events.

The Committee aims to begin both events promptly at the start times posted, and the end time for each event is an estimate based on the proposed agenda. The Prehearing Conference and Evidentiary Hearing may end sooner or later than the posted end times. The Committee will determine whether the Evidentiary Hearing will continue on the second day either during the Prehearing Conference on August 15, 2025, or during the first day of the Evidentiary Hearing on August 21, 2025, to accommodate the time necessary for the Parties to introduce their evidence and question the expert witnesses. If the Evidentiary Hearing adjourns on August 21, 2025, it will not convene or continue on August 22, 2025 and the presiding member will post a notice of adjournment.

Prehearing Conference

All Parties will join the Prehearing Conference remotely via Zoom. The public may attend the Prehearing Conference and provide comment remotely via Zoom as well.

Evidentiary Hearing

The Committee urges all Parties and their representatives and expert witnesses to appear at the Evidentiary Hearing in person to help ensure all participants have the opportunity to hear the entire proceeding while it is taking place and to observe the exhibits without concern of an internet disconnection stopping the hearing. The public may attend the proceedings and provide comment in person or remotely, consistent with the attendance instructions below.

BACKGROUND

On December 1, 2021, GEM A-CAES LLC (Applicant) filed an AFC with the CEC to construct and operate the Gem Energy Storage Center.² On August 5, 2022, Applicant changed the name of the project to the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center.³ On March 8, 2024, Applicant filed a Supplemental AFC (Supplemental AFC) which relocated and reconfigured the proposed project. The Supplemental AFC proposes a nominal 520 MW gross (500 MW net) and 4,160 MWh gross (4,000 MWh net) compressed air energy storage facility deploying Hydrostor Inc. (Hydrostor) Advanced Compressed Air Energy Storage (A-CAES) technology and related accessories. The proposed project would be sited north of Dawn Road and between State Route (SR) 14 and Sierra Highway within unincorporated Kern County, California, approximately 4 miles north of Rosamond, California. Energy stored at Willow Rock would be delivered to Southern California Edison's (SCE's) Whirlwind Substation located southwest of

² See application beginning with TN 240571-1 et seq.

³ TN 244331.

the site at the intersection of 170th Street W and Rosamond Boulevard, via a new approximately 19-mile 230-kilovolt (kV) generation-tie (gen-tie) line.

The Applicant filed the AFC under the CEC's licensing process. If approved, construction is proposed to begin by December 2025 with commercial operation to begin by November 2030.

The Parties to this proceeding include the Applicant, CEC Staff, and Intervenors California Unions for Reliable Energy (CURE)⁴ and the Center for Biological Diversity (the Center).⁵

PURPOSE OF PREHEARING CONFERENCE

The first event under this notice is the Prehearing Conference on August 15, 2025. The Prehearing Conference is a public forum in which the Committee will assess the Parties' readiness for the Evidentiary Hearing, discuss the format and agenda of the Evidentiary Hearing, identify areas of agreement or dispute, and discuss the remaining schedule and procedures necessary to conclude the application process.⁶

PURPOSE OF THE EVIDENTIARY HEARING

The second event under this notice is an Evidentiary Hearing beginning on August 21, 2025 and continuing to August 22, 2025 as necessary. The Evidentiary Hearing is an administrative adjudicatory proceeding to receive evidence into the formal hearing record from the parties. Only the Parties may present evidence for introduction into the formal hearing record, which is the only evidence upon which the CEC may base its decision under the law. Testimony offered by the Parties shall be under oath. Each Party has the right to present witnesses, introduce exhibits, and to rebut the evidence of another Party. At an Evidentiary Hearing for an AFC, the Committee shall consider the topics enumerated in California Code of Regulations, title 20, section 1745.5 to support the subsequent preparation of the proposed decision on the Application.⁷

PROCEDURES FOR THE EVIDENTIARY HEARING

Pursuant to California Government Code section 11445.10 et seq., and the California Code of Regulations, title 20, section 1210, the Committee elects to conduct all or portions of the Evidentiary Hearing using an informal procedure.

The informal hearing process will generally proceed in the following order:

⁴ TN 245943.

⁵ TN 258781.

⁶ Cal. Code Regs., tit. 20, § 1207.

⁷ Cal. Code Regs., tit. 20, § 1745.

- 1. At the Prehearing Conference, the Committee will confirm the subject areas for which any Party plans to offer an expert witness for oral testimony. "Subject areas" shall align with those identified in the table of contents of the Final Staff Assessment.⁸
- 2. For any subject area identified at the Prehearing Conference for oral testimony, all Parties' expert witnesses on that subject area will be sworn in together and testify as a panel. The Committee will convene separate panels for each individual subject area identified for oral testimony.
- 3. Applicant's expert witnesses will provide a brief opening statement summarizing the key points and conclusions of their testimony.
- 4. CEC Staff's expert witnesses will provide a brief opening statement summarizing the key points and conclusions of their testimony.
- 5. Intervenors' expert witnesses will provide a brief opening statement summarizing the key points and conclusions of their testimony.
- 6. The Committee will facilitate discussion among the expert witnesses on each panel.
- 7. The Committee may allow Parties to follow up with questions of any expert witness to the extent the Committee finds the questioning productive.
- 8. At the conclusion of the Parties' examination of the expert witnesses, the Committee may ask the expert witnesses additional questions. If productive, the Committee may facilitate questions and answers between the expert witnesses.
- 9. If the Evidentiary Hearing adjourns on August 21, 2025, the presiding member will post a notice on the evening of August 21, 2025 cancelling further proceedings on August 22, 2025.

FIFTH REVISED SCHEDULING ORDER

The Committee has established the following schedule for this proceeding, which supersedes all prior schedules:

EVENT	DATE	
Status Reports	The Parties are hereby relieved from	
•	submitting monthly status reports	
Last Day to Petition to Intervene	June 23, 2025	
Final Staff Assessment filed	July 16, 2025	
Parties File Opening Written Testimony and	July 30, 2025	
Evidence	July 30, 2023	

_

⁸ TN 264843.

All Parties File Rebuttal Written Testimony and Evidence ⁹	August 6, 2025
All Parties File Prehearing Conference Statements with Exhibit Lists	August 11, 2025
Prehearing Conference via Zoom	August 15, 2025
Evidentiary Hearing in Mojave, Kern County	August 21-22, 2025
All Parties File Closing Briefs (if determined to be necessary by the Committee)	5 business days after the hearing transcripts are filed
Presiding Member's Proposed Decision (PMPD) filed	Tentatively October 2025
Public Comment Period Closes on the PMPD	30 days after the PMPD is filed

ORDERS REGARDING EVIDENCE, WRITTEN TESTIMONY, EXHIBIT LISTS, AND PREHEARING CONFERENCE STATEMENTS

All Parties intending to submit evidence for consideration at the Evidentiary Hearing are **ORDERED** to docket evidence, written testimony, exhibit lists, and prehearing conference statements no later than 5:00 p.m. on the dates specified in the above schedule, and in accordance with the following directions. Failure by a Party to comply with the filing requirements stated in this Order may preclude that party from participating in the Evidentiary Hearing.

Evidence and Written Testimony

All evidence and written testimony must be docketed in this proceeding's docket (21-AFC-02) and have a transaction number (TN) assigned by the CEC's Dockets Unit. Exhibits without a TN, or not docketed in this proceeding's docket, will not be received into evidence absent a showing of good cause. If the document is already docketed, it need not be refiled; simply provide the TN on the Exhibit List. IMPORTANT: Each exhibit must have a unique TN and Exhibit number. Do not group several TNs under a single exhibit number or group several exhibits under a single TN.

_

⁹ Rebuttal testimony is in response to an issue first raised in opening testimony. Testimony which could have with reasonable diligence been filed as opening testimony, may be subject to exclusion on the motion of a Party or the Committee's own initiative.

Exhibit Lists

The Parties shall exchange documentary evidence, including written testimony, by filing an Exhibit List. Each document shall be numbered and identified on the Exhibit List as follows:

- Applicant's exhibits shall be numbered consecutively as Exhibits 1000 through 1999.
- CEC Staff's exhibits shall be numbered consecutively as Exhibits 2000 through 2999.
- Intervenor CURE's exhibits shall be numbered consecutively as Exhibits 3000 through 3999.
- Intervenor The Center's exhibits shall be numbered consecutively as Exhibits 4000 through 4999.

Each Exhibit List shall be formatted as four columns. The first column shall list the proposed exhibit number. The second column shall contain the TN of the corresponding document. The third column shall state the title of the document as shown in the docket. The fourth column shall state the subject area(s) to which the exhibit applies. Hearing Office staff will then add the exhibit number information to the e-filing system. Once the Hearing Office populates the e-filing system with the information from the Parties' proposed Exhibit Lists, the completed Exhibit Lists for the Evidentiary Hearing may be viewed by clicking on the Exhibit List link on the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center web page at

https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/energy-storage-system/willow-rock-energy-storage-center.

Prehearing Conference Statements

Pursuant to the schedule above, each Party shall file a Prehearing Conference Statement. The Prehearing Conference Statement must specify under separate headings:

- 1. The subject areas¹⁰ that are complete and ready to proceed to Evidentiary Hearing.
- 2. The subject areas upon which the Party proposes to introduce testimony in writing rather than through oral testimony.
- 3. The subject areas that are not complete and not yet ready to proceed to Evidentiary Hearing and the reasons therefor.
- 4. The subject areas that remain disputed and require adjudication, and the precise nature of the dispute for each issue.
- 5. The identity of each expert witness the Party intends to sponsor at the Evidentiary Hearing, the subject area(s) about which the expert witness(es) will offer testimony, whether the testimony will be oral or in writing, a brief summary of the testimony to be

 $^{^{10}}$ "Subject areas" are identified in the table of contents of the Final Staff Assessment filed as TN 264843.

- offered by the expert witness(es), qualifications of each expert witness, the time required to present testimony by each expert witness, and whether the expert witness seeks to testify via Zoom.
- 6. Any objections that the Party may have to oral testimony provided by videoconference, including solutions for the Committee to be able to structure the hearing in a manner that can address the objections.
- 7. Subject areas upon which the Party desires to question the other Parties' expert witness(es), a summary of the scope of the questions (including questions regarding expert witness qualifications), the issue(s) to which the questions pertain, and the time desired to question each expert witness. *NOTE*: A Party who fails to provide, with specificity, the scope, relevance, and time for questioning other Parties' expert witness(es) risks preclusion from questioning on that subject area.
- 8. A list identifying exhibits with transaction numbers (TN) that the Party intends to offer into evidence during the Evidentiary Hearing and the technical subject areas to which they apply (see above for further details on Exhibit Lists).
- 9. Proposals for post-hearing briefing deadlines, resolving scheduling conflicts, or other scheduling matters.

TRANSCRIPTS

The Prehearing Conference and Evidentiary Hearing will be officially transcribed by a court reporter and filed to the docket. Parties are responsible for identifying errors in the transcripts of the proceedings. Corrections to the transcripts must be docketed within 30 days of the filing of a transcript.

GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Government entities including California Native American tribes and local, state, and federal agencies, interested persons, and members of the public may attend the proceedings via Zoom or in person, as instructed above, and may provide oral comments during designated times during the proceedings. Additionally, representatives of tribal governments and local, state, and federal agencies may participate in the Evidentiary Hearing as expert witnesses to provide testimony.

Public Comment

Written and oral comments, attachments, and associated contact information (including address, phone number, and email address) will become part of the public record of this proceeding with access available via any internet search engine.

Written comments may be submitted on the proposed project to the docket unit by 5:00 p.m. on August 22, 2025. The CEC encourages the use of its electronic commenting system. Navigate to the "submit e-comment" pages (under Original Proceeding in the right margin) for

Willow Rock as follows:

https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Ecomment/Ecomment.aspx?docketnumber=21-AFC-02.

Enter your contact information and a subject title that describes your comment. Comments may be included in the "Comment Text" box or attached as a downloadable, searchable document in Microsoft® Word or Adobe® Acrobat®. The maximum file size allowed is 10 MB.

Written comments may also be submitted by email. Include docket number 21-AFC-02 and "Willow Rock Energy Storage Center" in the subject line and email to docket@energy.ca.gov.

A paper copy may be mailed to:

California Energy Commission
Docket Unit, MS-4
Docket No. 21-AFC-02
715 P Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Oral comments will be accepted at the end of the Prehearing Conference and Evidentiary Hearing. Comments may be limited to three minutes or less per speaker and one person per organization. To comment via Zoom, use the "raise hand" feature so the administrator can announce your name and unmute you. To comment via telephone, press *9 to "raise your hand" and *6 to mute/unmute.

INTERPRETING SERVICES

Spanish language interpreters will be available to provide services at both the Prehearing Conference and the Evidentiary Hearing. Interpretation in Spanish will be provided via Zoom for the Prehearing Conference, and both in person and via Zoom for the Evidentiary Hearing. Interpretation services in other languages can also be provided, if requested. The CEC suggests making the request for interpreting services as soon as possible to help ensure we can adequately accommodate the request. To request interpretation services, please contact the CEC's Public Advisor at the e-mail address or phone number below.

PUBLIC ADVISOR AND OTHER CEC CONTACTS

The CEC's Public Advisor assists members of the public with participation in CEC proceedings. To request assistance, interpreting services, or reasonable modifications and accommodations, For information on how to participate in this proceeding, please email publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov, or call (916) 957-7910 at least five days in advance of each event. The CEC will work diligently to meet all requests based on availability.

Direct questions of a procedural nature to the assigned Hearing Officer:

• Reneé Webster-Hawkins, at <u>renee.webster-hawkins@energy.ca.gov</u> or (916) 237-2507.

Direct technical subject inquiries concerning the proceeding to the Project Manager:

• Eric Veerkamp, at STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov or (916) 661-8458.

Direct media inquiries to mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov or (916) 654-4989.

ATTENDANCE INSTRUCTIONS

August 15, 2025 Prehearing Conference – Remote Attendance ONLY

All Parties and interested members of the public shall join the Prehearing Conference via Zoom by internet or phone. **Representatives of the Parties each need an individual panelist link to appear and participate in the Prehearing Conference.** To request panelist links, the Hearing Office asks that one person on behalf of each Party submit a list of the names, titles, and email addresses of individuals who will appear for that Party, to Blanca Camberos at blanca.camberos@energy.ca.gov no later than 12:00 p.m. on August 8, 2025. Interested members of the public can join via Zoom in webinar mode, and will be able to provide public comment.

- Click to join the Prehearing Conference via Zoom or https://energy.zoom.us/j/83927021068?pwd=OjebRJHrtWai91qIh2okbzjoSqm06H.1&_g l=1*1hag16i*_ga*MTg5ODA1Nzg2LjE3MzgwMDQyOTQ.*_ga_L8TBF28DDX*czE3NTI1M DY5MDkkbzU5JGcxJHQxNzUyNTA2OTM3JGozMiRsMCRoMA.
- Or login in at https://zoom.us/ and enter the Webinar ID 839 2702 1068 and passcode Energy and follow all prompts.
- To join the Prehearing Conference by telephone. Call toll-free at (888) 475-4499 or toll at (669) 219-2599. When prompted, enter the Webinar ID **839 2702 1068** and passcode **Energy**.

August 21, 2025 (and continuing August 22, 2025 as necessary) Evidentiary Hearing — In-person or Remote Attendance Options

The Committee urges all Parties and their representatives and expert witnesses to appear at the Evidentiary Hearing in person. The public can attend the proceedings and provide public comment in person or remotely via Zoom. • To join the Evidentiary Hearing in person, convene at:

Mojave Air & Space Port/Stuart O. Witt Event Center 1247 Poole Street Mojave, CA 93501

- Click to join the Evidentiary Hearing via Zoom or https://energy.zoom.us/j/81813641093?pwd=nst0O9kKe4t3Hy2e2WoiUM82feIUmw.1& ampDeviceId=740c90d6-cda5-48d7-8e3a-179612e60789&SessionId=1752506911909&_gl=1*14i7nm9*_ga*MTg5ODA1Nzg2 LjE3MzgwMDQyOTQ.*_ga_L8TBF28DDX*czE3NTI1MDY5MDkkbzU5JGcxJHQxNzUyNTA3 MTM0JGoxJGwwJGqw.
- Or login in at https://zoom.us/ and enter the Webinar ID 818 1364 1093 and passcode Energy and follow all prompts.
- To join the Evidentiary Hearing by telephone. Call toll-free at (888) 475-4499 or toll at (669) 219-2599. When prompted, enter the Webinar ID **818 1364 1093** and passcode **Energy**.

Zoom Closed Captioning Service. At the bottom of the screen, click the Live Transcript CC icon and choose "Show Subtitle" or "View Full Transcript" from the pop-up menu. To stop closed captioning, close the "Live Transcript" or select "Hide Subtitle" from the pop-up menu. If joining by phone, closed captioning is automatic and cannot be turned off. While closed captioning is available in real-time, it can include errors. A more accurate official transcript of the workshop will be docketed and posted as soon as possible after the meeting concludes.

Zoom Spanish Language Interpreting Services. Open the Zoom meeting. In the "Navigation" panel, click "Settings," then click the "Meeting" tab. Under "In Meeting (Advanced)," click "Language Interpretation" toggle to enable/ disable. If a verification dialog displays, click "Enable" or "Disable" to verify the change. If the option is grayed out, it has been locked and you will need to contact your Zoom admin. Click "Mute Original Audio" to reduce background noise.

Zoom Difficulty. Contact Zoom at (888) 799-9666 ext. 2, or the CEC's Public Advisor at publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov, or by phone at (916) 957-7910.

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

Information about the Application for Certification for the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center, as well as notices and other relevant documents pertaining to this proceeding, may be viewed on the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center webpage at:

https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/caes/willow-rock-energy-storage-center or scan the following QR code:



IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: July 17, 2025

APPROVED

J. Andrew McAllister, PhD Commissioner and Presiding Member Willow Rock Energy Storage Center AFC Committee

APPROVED

Noemí Otilia Osuna Gallardo Commissioner and Associate Member Willow Rock Energy Storage Center AFC Committee

Willow Rock Energy Storage Center (21-AFC-02)

Prehearing Conference Agenda Friday, August 15, 2025 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Remote Only via Zoom

- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Prehearing Conference
- 3. Public Comment

Members of the public and other interested persons may speak for up to three minutes on matters related to this proceeding.

4. Adjourn

Willow Rock Energy Storage Center (21-AFC-02)

Evidentiary Hearing Agenda
Thursday August 21, 2025
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
and
Friday August 22, 2025 (if necessary)
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Mojave Air & Space Port

Stuart O. Witt Event Center 1247 Poole Street Mojave, CA 93501

Remote Access for the public is also available via ZOOM

[Agenda for each day]

- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Evidentiary Hearing
- 3. Public Comment

Members of the public and other interested persons may speak for up to three minutes on matters related to this proceeding.

4. Recess/Adjourn