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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 SITE VISIT AND INFORMATIONAL HEARING,
AND COMMITTEE ORDER**

On September 9, 2024, the Committee¹ in this proceeding filed a Revised Scheduling Order that scheduled a Site Visit and Informational Hearing for the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center (Willow Rock) for November 6, 2024.² The Committee hereby issues this formal Notice of the Site Visit and Informational Hearing (Notice). This Notice also provides direction to the parties for engagement in the event and guidance for all other interested persons and the public to participate.

1. BACKGROUND

A. Original Application for Certification

On December 1, 2021, GEM A-CAES LLC (Gem LLC or Applicant) filed an application for certification (AFC) with the California Energy Commission (CEC) to construct and operate a nominal 500-megawatt (MW) energy storage center deploying Hydrostor Inc. (Hydrostor) Advanced Compressed Air Energy Storage (A-CAES) technology and related ancillary equipment. The original application (Original AFC) proposed that the facility be located on a 71-acre site at the mailing address of 8684 Sweetser Road, Rosamond, California, 93560; the Original AFC also included plans for a 10.9-mile

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>.

² [TN 259084](#), confirming the Hearing Officer's memo to all parties and interested persons to save the same date. See [TN 259014](#).

interconnection to the Southern California Edison Whirlwind Substation or a 3.5-mile interconnection to the future Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Rosamond Substation.³

On August 11, 2022, the Committee convened a site visit and informational hearing on the Original AFC.⁴ After many months of discovery, exchange of information, and analysis of the feasibility and potential impacts of the Willow Rock project as proposed by the Original AFC, the Committee granted Staff's motion to suspend the proceeding on August 11, 2023 (Suspension Order),⁵ because key project features appeared to require revision. The Suspension Order provided that the suspension would terminate, and the AFC proceeding would resume, after Applicant filed a supplemental AFC and the Executive Director verified the completeness of the supplemental AFC.

B. Supplemental Application for Certification

Beginning March 1, 2024, the Applicant began submitting materials related to a supplemental AFC to the docket,⁶ and on March 8, 2024 attested to the completeness of its supplemental application (Supplemental AFC).⁷ The attestation provided detailed tables indicating which pre-existing documents remained applicable to the Supplemental AFC and which were "largely superseded."⁸ On April 23, 2024, Staff initially found the Supplemental AFC incomplete, providing a detailed table reflecting its data adequacy review and requesting additional necessary data.⁹ After Applicant submitted data responsive to Staff's review, on July 16, 2024 the CEC Executive Director verified that the Supplemental AFC was complete and recommended that the Committee accept the Supplemental AFC as complete and restart the 12-month timeline to reach a decision on the Supplemental AFC pursuant to Public Resources Code, section 25540.6.¹⁰ Based on that recommendation, the Committee terminated the Suspension Order on July 26, 2024, and reinstated the proceeding.¹¹

The Supplemental AFC proposes a relocated and reconfigured Willow Rock project as a nominal 520 MW gross (500 MW net) and 4,160 MWh gross (4,000 MWh net) compressed air energy storage facility using Hydrostor's A-CAES technology and related accessories, including without limitation, eight electric-motor-driven air compressors configured in four trains, four air-powered turbine generators with 100-foot-tall air vent stacks, thermal storage systems including six 100-foot-tall hot-

³ The application and all filed documents related to the application for certification proceeding are available via the "Docket Log (21-AFC- 02)" link on the [proceeding's web page](https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/caes/willow-rock-energy-storage-center) at <https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/caes/willow-rock-energy-storage-center>. The application comprises many separate documents filed in the docket beginning December 1, 2021, e.g., the introduction is TN 240751-2.

⁴ [TN 244282](#).

⁵ [TN 251599](#).

⁶ [TN 254774](#) et seq.

⁷ [TN 254951](#).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ [TN 255890](#).

¹⁰ [TN 257763](#).

¹¹ [TN 258022](#).

water spherical storage tanks, a 21.5-acre, 577-acre-foot hydrostatically compensating surface reservoir with liner and interlocking shape floating cover, a 900,000 cubic yard underground compressed air storage cavern, and all associated operational and safety equipment and piping.

The new location is an 88.6-acre portion of an approximately 112-acre parcel, 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 the Southern California Edison (SCE) Whirlwind Substation located southwest of 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. Willow Rock would be capable of operating on a 24-hour basis, 365 days a year with an approximately 50-year lifespan.¹²

2. NOTICE OF SITE VISIT AND INFORMATIONAL HEARING

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Committee has scheduled a public Site Visit and Informational Hearing to discuss the proposed project as described below:

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2024
Willow Rock Site Visit and Informational Hearing
Site Visit begins at 3:00 p.m.
Informational Hearing begins at approximately 5:00 p.m.
Rosamond Community Services District Board Room
3179 35th Street West
Rosamond, California 93560

A. Site Visit

Prior to the informational hearing, all parties, interested persons, and the public are invited to join the Committee on a tour of the proposed site. The Applicant will provide charter bus transportation to and from the project site and substation leaving from the Rosamond Community Services District Board Room at 3179 35th Street West, Rosamond, CA 93560 at 3:00 p.m.

All persons wishing to attend the site visit must make an advance reservation to ensure adequate seating on the buses. To make a reservation, [please click on the following link: https://forms.office.com/g/5JMReZN41X](https://forms.office.com/g/5JMReZN41X), or scan (use the camera on your mobile device and hold it over the QR code) the following QR code:

¹² See Willow Rock Energy Storage Center Supplemental AFC, Volume 1, Part A at [TN 254806](#).



Please make your reservation before Wednesday October 30, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. to reserve your spot. Spanish interpretation will be available for those who attend the site visit in person. Requests for reasonable accommodations ~~or Spanish interpretation~~ on the site visit should be made as soon as possible and no later than October 30, 2024, by email at publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov or calling (916) 957-7910.

B. Informational Hearing

i. Attendance Options

The Informational Hearing will begin at approximately 5:00 p.m. in the Rosamond Community Services District Board Room following the conclusion of the Site Visit.

- The Committee and Hearing Officer will attend the Informational Hearing in person at the physical location provided in this Notice.
- The Parties are each directed to have at least one representative appear in person.
- Interested persons including representatives from other state and local agencies, tribal governments, and members of the public may attend and participate in the questions and answers and public comment either in person at the physical location or via remote teleconference by either Internet or call-in options.

For instructions on how to participate remotely, please see the "Remote Access Instructions" below.

Spanish interpretation will be available for persons attending the Informational Hearing both in person and remotely via Zoom.

ii. Purpose of the Informational Hearing

The CEC's power plant licensing process, which incorporates substantive requirements equivalent to the environmental impact report process of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), considers all relevant engineering and environmental aspects of the proposed project. The power plant licensing process provides a public forum allowing the Applicant, CEC Staff (Staff), intervening parties, governmental agencies, adjacent landowners, and members of the general public to discuss

the advantages and disadvantages of the project, and to propose changes, mitigation measures, and alternatives as necessary.

The Informational Hearing provides an opportunity for members of the community in the project vicinity to learn about and understand the proposed project. The public will be able to obtain information about areas of engineering and environmental concern to be addressed during the CEC's project review, ask questions and offer comments, and view the project site. During the hearing, the Hearing Officer will explain the administrative licensing process and the role of the Committee. The CEC Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs (Public Advisor) will describe how the parties, interested persons, and the public can participate in the licensing process, and will also describe the opportunities for tribal consultation. The Applicant will explain its plans for constructing and operating the project and the related facilities. The Staff will describe its role in reviewing and analyzing the application for certification and highlight issues it has identified thus far with the Willow Rock Supplemental AFC. Intervenors California Unions for Reliable Energy (CURE) and Center for Biological Diversity (the Center) will each describe their interests in the proceeding. Other state and local agencies, and tribal governments, will be invited to describe their interests in of any aspect of the Willow Rock project. The Committee will allow questions to the Applicant and Staff from any persons regarding the proposed project. Members of the public may offer oral comments. Please see the agenda for the public Site Visit and Informational Hearing attached to this Notice.

3. ORDERS RE PARTY PREPARATION & PARTICIPATION IN THE INFORMATIONAL HEARING

Pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 20, section 1709.7, the Committee hereby **ORDERS**:

- A. By October 23, 2024, CEC Staff, CURE, and the Center shall each file a separate concise Issues Identification Report summarizing the major issues that the party believes, thus far, are presented in the Supplemental AFC.
- B. By October 23, 2024, any state or local government agency which is not currently a party, but which would like to describe their permitting or other authority over any aspect of the Willow Rock project at the Informational Hearing shall file: a) a request to present at the Informational Hearing and b) a concise Issues Identification Report summarizing the major permitting issues that the agency believes, thus far, are presented in the Supplemental AFC.
- C. By October 23, 2024, any tribal government that would like to describe their tribal cultural interest in any aspect of the Willow Rock project in a prepared presentation at the Informational Hearing is asked to file a request to present at the Informational Hearing, together with a concise Issues Identification Report summarizing the major issues the tribal government has identified thus far with the Supplemental AFC. Alternatively, any tribal

government may participate along with other interested persons and the public in the question and answer or public comment portions of the event without advance notice.

- D. By October 30, 2024, Applicant shall file its concise response to any Issues Identification Reports filed by CEC Staff, CURE, the Center, state or local government agencies, and tribal governments.
- E. The Applicant shall deliver a presentation of not more than 10-minutes in length at the Informational Hearing describing the proposed project in the Supplement AFC.
- F. Staff shall deliver a presentation of not more than 10-minutes in length at the Informational Hearing describing Staff's role in reviewing and analyzing the Supplemental AFC, and the issues it identified in its Issues Identification Report.
- G. CURE and the Center shall deliver presentations of not more than 7-minutes in length each at the Informational Hearing describing their respective interests in the Supplemental AFC and the issues identified in their Issues Identification Reports.
- H. Any state, local, or tribal government agency requesting an opportunity to present may deliver a presentation of not more than 5-minutes in length each at Informational Hearing describing their respective interests in the Supplemental AFC and any issues identified in their Issues Identification Reports.
- I. No later than October 30, 2024, any participant that wishes to present slides as part of their presentation at the Informational Hearing shall submit their slide deck into the docket in a single PDF which has passed an ADA accessibility check if feasible.

4. SCHEDULE AND OTHER MATTERS

The Revised Committee Scheduling Order for the Supplemental AFC was published on September 9, 2024, identifying dates and deadlines for all remaining key events.¹³ Any requests for relief from that order shall be subject to the requirements set forth therein, including meet-and-confer and motion.

5. EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS

All parties and persons interested in the Willow Rock AFC are reminded that this proceeding is subject to the ex parte rules in the Administrative Procedure Act and CEC Regulations,¹⁴ which prohibit any off-the-record communications between any party or other person interested in this proceeding and any CEC Commissioner, including but not

¹³ [TN 259084](#).

¹⁴ Government Code, § 11430.10, and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 2, § 1216.

limited to the Commissioners on this Committee, the Commissioners' advisors, and the Hearing Officers about any issue in the proceeding.

Until the CEC finally adopts a final decision on the project, no one who is a party, or representative from another state or local agency or tribal government, or any interested person may communicate to a CEC Commissioner, Committee member, or Hearing Officer about any issue about the Willow Rock AFC without providing notice and opportunity for all parties to participate in the communication.

Please note that communications during the public Site Visit are considered off-the-record since there is no court reporter and not all parties will have the opportunity to participate in each communication during the tour.

6. REMOTE ACCESS INSTRUCTIONS VIA ZOOM – INFORMATIONAL HEARING ONLY

Remote access for the Informational Hearing is available by either Internet ~~via Zoom~~ or call-in options via Zoom.

Zoom: Click here to join the November 6th, 2024, Informational Hearing and provide public comment via Zoom:

<https://energy.zoom.us/j/88159018916?pwd=e7aHaB7C0bNZyfzNduSZVmrj7h4r86.1>

Zoom may also be accessed at <https://zoom.us/join>. To join, enter the Webinar ID **881 5901 8916** and the password **WAFC@1106**.

Call-In by Phone: To participate by phone, dial (669) 900-6833 or toll free at (888) 475-4499 and enter Webinar ID **881 5901 8916**. For Zoom technical support dial (888) 799-9666 ext. 2 or contact the CEC's Public Advisor for help at publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov and (916) 957-7910.

Public comment periods will be available during the informational hearing. Depending on the number of members of the public seeking to make a comment or ask a question, the Hearing Officer may adjust the total time allotted for public comment and the time allotted for each comment.

If participating via Zoom's online platform, use the "raise hand" feature to indicate you would like to make a comment. The Public Advisor will open your line to speak. Please restate and spell your name for the record; indicate if you have an affiliation and begin your comments.

If participating by telephone, press *9 to "raise your hand" and *6 to mute/unmute. The Public Advisor will announce the last three digits of the phone number listed and open your line. Make sure to unmute your phone before speaking then restate and spell your name for the record, indicate if you have an affiliation; and begin your comments.

Zoom’s closed captioning service will be enabled for the Informational Hearing. Attendees can use the service by clicking on the “live transcript” icon and then choosing either “show subtitle” or “view full transcript.” The closed captioning service can be stopped by exiting out of the “live transcript” or selecting the “hide subtitle” icon. If using a phone, closed captioning is automatic and cannot be turned off. While the closed captioning is available in real-time, it typically includes errors. A full and formal transcript rendered by a professional court reporter will be posted in the docket for this proceeding (see Availability of Documents below).

7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Public Advisor Assistance

For questions about how to participate in the Site Visit or Informational Hearing or to request interpreting services or other reasonable modifications and accommodations, contact the Public Advisor at publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov or by phone at (916) 957-7910. Requests for interpreting services other than Spanish, reasonable accommodations, and other modifications should be made as soon as possible and at least five days in advance. The CEC will work diligently to meet all requests based on the availability of the service or resource needed. Additionally, the Public Advisor may upon the request of public participants who may be absent from the Informational Hearing, neutrally and publicly relate those participants’ points to the Committee on behalf of members of the public. If you are interested in this service, please email concise comments, specifying your main points, before the start of the informational hearing to the Public Advisor. Comments submitted after the Informational Hearing starts will be filed in the proceeding’s docket.

Availability of Documents

All documents filed in this proceeding are available via the “Docket Log (21-AFC-02)” link on the [Willow Rock proceeding web page](https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/caes/willow-rock-energy-storage-center) at <https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/caes/willow-rock-energy-storage-center>, or scan (use the camera on your mobile device and hold it over the QR code) the following QR code:



Automated Email Notifications

Any person may subscribe to receive an automated email when a document is filed in the proceeding. Parties who are on the Proof of Service List will receive these automated emails and do not need to additionally subscribe for the proceeding. The proceeding's web page listed above provides a box to subscribe for automated email notifications, or [manage automated email subscriptions](#) at <https://www.energy.ca.gov/subscriptions>, or scan the following QR code:



Questions

Parties and members of the public may contact Hearing Officer René Webster-Hawkins at renee.webster-hawkins@energy.ca.gov or (916) 237-2507 for clarifications about this order or general procedural questions.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: October 2, 2024

APPROVED BY:

Andrew McAllister
Commissioner and Presiding Member
Willow Rock Energy Storage Center
AFC Committee

Dated: October 2, 2024

APPROVED BY:

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

Mailed to List Number: 7544

AGENDA

Willow Rock Energy Storage Center AFC (21-AFC-02) Site Visit and Informational Hearing

Wednesday, November 6, 2024
Site Visit begins at 3:00 p.m.

**Informational Hearing begins at approximately 5:00 p.m.
or upon the conclusion of the Site Visit**

1. **3:00 p.m. Site Visit.** The Site Visit begins at 3:00 p.m. and the busses will begin boarding at 2:45 p.m. (Complimentary bus transportation leaves the Rosamond Community Services District building for the project site at 3:00 p.m.)
2. **Approximately 5:00 p.m. Informational Hearing.** The Informational Hearing will include prepared presentations about the proceeding, opportunity for discussion and questions from interested persons, and public comment. Presenters are kindly asked to abide by the time limitations set forth in the Notice, to ensure ample time for the Committee's engagement with all community members.
 - Committee Welcome
 - Presentation by the Hearing Officer: Overview of the AFC Process
 - Presentation by the Public Advisor: Opportunities for Public Participation and Tribal Consultation
 - Presentation by Applicant on the Proposed Project
 - Presentations by Intervenors, and Other State, Local, and Tribal Government Representatives
 - Presentation by CEC Staff: Staff's Review and Issues Identification
 - Discussion: Discussion of the environmental, engineering, and other identified issues
 - Question and Answer: Members of the public, agency officials, and other interested persons and entities may ask questions on any matter related to this proceeding.
 - Public Comment: Members of the public and other interested persons and entities may speak for up to three minutes each on any matter related to this proceeding.

3. **Adjourn**