

DOCKETED	
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Project Title:	Willow Rock Energy Storage Center
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Notice of Availability and Opportunity to Comment Preliminary Staff Assessment for the Proposed Willow Rock Energy Storage Center (21-AFC-02)

Para Español: <https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=21-AFC-02>

You are receiving this notice as you have been identified as either (1) a property owner or occupant adjacent to the project site or a property owner within 1,000 feet of the project site or 500 feet of project linear project components, (2) a trustee or interested agency, or (3) an interested party who has requested to be included on the project mailing list.

On March 13, 2025, California Energy Commission (CEC) staff filed a Partial Preliminary Staff Assessment, with a limited subset of sections establishing partial environmental analysis and engineering evaluation supporting CEC staff's conclusions and proposed conditions of certification (COCs), including: Facility Reliability, Transmission System Engineering, Efficiency and Energy Resources, Noise and Vibration, and Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance (TN 262184). This PSA replaces the partial PSA.

This notice is to inform you of the availability of the PSA for the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center (Willow Rock, or WRESC) Application for Certification (21-AFC-02) published on April 29, 2025, and the opportunity to provide public comments on the PSA through June 16, 2025. The PSA contains the CEC staff's preliminary engineering, environmental, and public health and safety evaluation of the proposed WRESC. The PSA provides staff's analyses in the areas of Air Quality; Alternatives; Biological Resources; Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources; Efficiency and Energy Resources; Environmental Justice; Facility Design; Facility Reliability; Geology, Paleontology and Minerals; Hazards, Hazardous Materials/Waste, and Wildfire; Land Use, Agriculture, and Forestry; Noise and Vibration; Public Benefits; Public Health; Socioeconomics; Solid Waste Management; Transmission Line Safety and Nuisance; Transmission System Engineering; Transportation; Visual Resources; Water Resources; and Worker Safety and Fire Protection.

The PSA is not a decision document for these proceedings, nor does it contain findings of the CEC related to environmental impacts or the project's compliance with local, state,

and federal laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards (LORS). After the public comment period and hosting a workshop to receive comments on this PSA, staff will prepare and publish a Final Staff Assessment that will serve as staff's formal testimony in evidentiary hearings to be held by the CEC Committee assigned to conduct this Application for Certification (AFC) proceeding. The Committee will hold evidentiary hearings and will consider the information and recommendations presented by the staff, applicant, intervenors, government agencies, California Native American tribes, and the public, prior to issuing its proposed decision for consideration by the CEC. The CEC will make the final decision, including findings, following a comment period on the Committee's proposed decision.

Summary of the Proposed Project

The WRESC would be a nominal 520-megawatt (MW) gross (500 MW net) and 4,160 megawatt-hour (MWh) gross (4,000 MWh net) facility using Hydrostor, Inc.'s (Hydrostor's) proprietary, advanced compressed air energy storage technology. The overall facility would consist of four nominal 130 MW gross power turbine trains, outputting a total of 500 MW net at the point of interconnection. The trains would contain electric motor-driven air compressors, heat exchangers, air turbine generators, air exhaust stacks, and ancillary equipment. The trains would share a common set of thermal storage tanks (hot and cold water), as well as the air storage cavern. Energy stored at the WRESC would be delivered to Southern California Edison's Whirlwind Substation located southwest of the WRESC at the intersection of 170th Street W and Rosamond Boulevard, via a new approximately 19-mile 230-kilovolt generation intertie-line. The WRESC would be capable of operating on a 24-hour basis, 365 days a year with an approximately 50-year lifespan.

As a long-duration energy storage asset, the WRESC would be able to provide power during periods of increased need on the grid such as times of high electrical load, periods when intermittent renewable source generation fluctuates, when baseload plants are not operating or are being brought online, or during grid emergency conditions or local reliability needs. To maximize efficiency, the facility is expected to charge during times of low demand on the grid such as times of low electrical load and during periods when renewable source generation is higher than the instantaneous system demand, thus affording the ability to store excess renewable generation that might otherwise be lost.

California Energy Commission's Site Certification Process

The CEC is responsible for reviewing and ultimately approving or denying all AFCs to construct and operate thermal power plants, 50 MW and greater, in California. The CEC's facility certification process carefully examines public health and safety, environmental impacts, and engineering aspects of proposed power plants and all related facilities such as electric transmission lines and water pipelines. The CEC's power plant site certification process is a certified regulatory program as defined in the

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and the CEC is the lead agency under CEQA.

Summary of California Energy Commission Staff's Preliminary Conclusions

In the PSA, CEC staff concludes that with implementation of the recommended conditions of certification (COCs), WRESC would comply with all applicable LORS. Staff also concludes that with the exception of Visual Resources and with the implementation of the COCs, potentially significant impacts would be avoided or reduced to less than significant levels. In Visual Resources, staff finds that the project creates significant unavoidable impacts to the visual character from certain observation points.

Availability of the Preliminary Staff Assessment

Access to the PSA and other project information/reports will be available electronically through the CEC's project docket website at:

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

Persons who cannot access the materials through the link above are encouraged to email Eric Veerkamp, Project Manager, at: STEPSiting@energy.ca.gov, with a subject line "Willow Rock" or call (916) 661-8458 to arrange for alternative means of access to project materials.

Public Resources, Contact Information and Additional Sources for Information

Contact: For questions about this notice, please contact Eric Veerkamp, Project Manager, at (916) 661-8458 or via e-mail at STEPSiting@energy.ca.gov.

Agency and Public Participation: The CEC encourages agency and public participation in the review of WRESC's AFC. The agency and public comment period for this PSA is from **April 29 to June 16, 2025**. The preferable method to submit responses is via the CEC's electronic commenting or filing (e-Comment; e-Filing) system. To access this system, go to the CEC's webpage for this proceeding: <https://www.energy.ca.gov/powerplant/energy-storage-system/willow-rock-energy-storage-center>, click on the "Submit e-Comment" or "Submit e-Filing" link, and follow the instructions in the online form. Please be sure to include the project name in your comments. Once filed, the comments and/or document(s) will become part of the proceeding's public record.

If you wish to mail written comments on the project, please submit them to the CEC Docket Unit. Please include the docket number (21-AFC-02) for the WRESC project in the subject line or first paragraph of your comments and mail them to:

California Energy Commission
Docket Unit, MS 4
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

All written comments and materials filed with the Docket Unit will become a part of the public record of the proceeding. Additionally, comments will be posted on the WRESC webpage of the CEC's website.

The CEC's Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs is available to provide information on, and assistance with, public participation in CEC proceedings. The Public Advisor's Office can be reached by phone at (916) 957-7910 and by email at publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov.

Media questions should be directed to the CEC's Media Office by phone at (916) 654-4989 or by email at mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov.