

**DOCKETED**

<b>Docket Number:</b>	21-AFC-02
<b>Project Title:</b>	Willow Rock Energy Storage Center
<b>TN #:</b>	262592
<b>Document Title:</b>	Notice of Status Conference
<b>Description:</b>	Committee Notice of Status Conference on April 14, 2025 from 1:00pm to 3:00pm requiring all Parties to appear via Zoom. The public may attend via Zoom.
<b>Filer:</b>	Renee Webster-Hawkins
<b>Organization:</b>	California Energy Commission
<b>Submitter Role:</b>	Hearing Office
<b>Submission Date:</b>	4/4/2025 3:26:32 PM
<b>Docketed Date:</b>	4/4/2025

**CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION**715 P Street  
Sacramento, California 95814[energy.ca.gov](http://energy.ca.gov)

CEC-70 (Revised 7/22)

*IN THE MATTER OF:**Willow Rock Energy Storage Center*

DOCKET NO. 21-AFC-02

NOTICE OF STATUS CONFERENCE

**Notice of Status Conference**  
**Willow Rock Energy Storage Center**  
**April 14, 2025**  
**Start Time 1:00 p.m. – End Time 3:00 p.m.**  
**Remote Access Only**  
See Attendance Instructions

A Status Conference is set by the California Energy Commission (CEC) Committee<sup>1</sup> in this proceeding to address scheduling issues raised by the Parties<sup>2</sup> related to the prehearing and evidentiary phase of the Application for Certification (AFC) proceeding for the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center (Willow Rock). The Committee, Hearing Officer, and all Parties shall appear remotely via Zoom. The public may listen to the hearing consistent with the attendance instructions below. The Committee aims to begin promptly at the start time posted, and the end time is an estimate.

**The Parties should note that the Third Revised Scheduling Order, issued on April 2, 2025, has not been amended, and therefore all deadlines from that Order – including the Preliminary Staff Assessment deadline of April 16, 2025 – remain in place.**

**RELEVANT BACKGROUND**

On December 1, 2021, GEM A-CAES LLC (Applicant) filed an AFC with the CEC to construct and operate a proposed energy storage center in Kern County, currently named the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center (Willow Rock), deploying advanced compressed air energy storage (A-

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<sup>1</sup> 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](https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=21-AFC-02) at <https://efiling.energy.ca.gov/Lists/DocketLog.aspx?docketnumber=21-AFC-02>.

<sup>2</sup> The Parties include: Applicant Gem A-CAES, LLC; CEC Staff; and Intervenors California Unions for Reliable Energy (CURE) and the Center for Biological Diversity (The Center).

CAES) technology.<sup>3</sup> After an extended suspension of the proceeding unopposed by the Applicant,<sup>4</sup> the proposed project was relocated and reconfigured,<sup>5</sup> necessitating new discovery, data exchange, and analysis among the Parties beginning July 26, 2024.<sup>6</sup> Since then, the schedule for this proceeding has been a subject of controversy and revision.<sup>7</sup>

The Committee issued its Third Revised Scheduling Order on April 2, 2025.<sup>8</sup> The CEC Staff (Staff) promptly filed a Motion to Revise the Schedule describing recently received and outstanding information germane to the Preliminary and Final Staff Assessments and seeking significant adjustments to the schedule.<sup>9</sup> The Applicant's recent Status Report filed March 25, 2025, describes the post-discovery data requests from Staff and reiterates the importance of a final decision from the CEC in 2025.<sup>10</sup> The record demonstrates that the Parties have not been able to reach mutual agreement on a schedule that balances Staff's need to obtain substantial evidence to support its complete assessment of the AFC versus the Applicant obtaining a final decision by the end of the calendar year.

## **AGENDA**

The Committee will convene this Status Conference to engage the Parties in direct conversation to resolve the scheduling issues:

- The Parties shall come prepared to discuss their readiness to meet all dates currently set in the Third Revised Scheduling Order.
- The Parties shall be prepared to discuss the impacts – beneficial or adverse – of maintaining or adjusting any of the deadlines in the Third Revised Scheduling Order on the ability of the CEC to make legally required findings based on substantial evidence and an ultimate decision on the proposed certification of the Willow Rock Energy Storage Center.
- The Parties shall be prepared to identify what outstanding information is needed to establish the substantial evidence necessary for the completion of the Preliminary Staff Assessment and explain the impact of the missing information on the ability of Staff, the Committee, or the CEC to determine whether there are significant impacts from the project or mitigation measures to lessen the impacts to a level below significant.

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<sup>3</sup> See application beginning with TN 240571-1 et seq.

<sup>4</sup> TN 251029 & TN 251186.

<sup>5</sup> See supplemental application beginning with TN 254774 et seq.

<sup>6</sup> See Revised Scheduling Order at TN 259084.

<sup>7</sup> See Order Granting in Part and Denying in Part Applicant's Motion to Amend Revised Scheduling Order at TN260601, and the Parties' status reports filed monthly in the docket.

<sup>8</sup> TN 262562.

<sup>9</sup> TN 262571.

<sup>10</sup> TN 262357.

- The Committee is interested in the specific status of and/or timelines for information that may be based on data, determinations, or approvals from other state and local governments or third parties, including but not limited to:
  - The incidental take permit applications for the burrowing owl and Crotch's bumble bee pending before the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).
  - The review by the Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) of the compensation reservoir.
  - The Requested Conditions of Approval from Kern County.<sup>11</sup>
  - Landowner and public agency engagement to finalize the siting of the transmission line.

## **ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS**

The convening of the Status Conference shall not be interpreted to signal that the Committee will grant the Staff's Motion in whole or in part. The Parties shall abide by the dates in the Third Revised Scheduling Order, until such dates may be revised in writing by the Committee. Specifically in the near term:

- The Applicant and Intervenors shall each provide a response to Staff's Motion to Revise the Schedule no later than April 9, 2025.
- The Staff shall publish a complete Preliminary Staff Assessment no later than April 16, 2025, pursuant to the Committee's instructions in Order No. 2 of the Third Revised Scheduling Order which states: "The CEC Staff shall publish the Preliminary Staff Assessment and Final Staff Assessment no later than 5:00 p.m. on [April 16, 2025 and May 30, 2025 respectively]. If the Staff lacks sufficient information to complete any resource analysis, the discussion in the assessment shall identify what is missing, describe the chronology of Staff's attempts to obtain the information, and explain the impact of the missing information on Staff's ability to determine whether there are significant impacts from the project or mitigation to lessen the impacts to a level below significant."<sup>12</sup>

## **ATTENDANCE INSTRUCTIONS**

All participants shall join remotely via Zoom by internet or phone.

- **To join via Zoom.** Click on <https://energy.zoom.us/j/83927021068?pwd=zGF6UuOL1w0SYR6oySII5voKweXHop.1> or login in at <https://zoom.us/> and enter the Webinar ID **839 2702 1068** and passcode **808712** and follow all prompts.
- **To join 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 **808712**.

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<sup>11</sup> TN 259786.

<sup>12</sup> TN 262562, p. 7.

**Representatives of the Parties each need an individual panelist link to appear and participate.** 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](mailto:blanca.camberos@energy.ca.gov) no later than April 11, 2025 at 12 noon.

**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 transcript of the workshop will be docketed and posted as soon as possible after the meeting concludes.

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

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The CEC encourages the use of its electronic commenting system. Visit the e-commenting page for this docket [21-AFC-02](#) at <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.

**Oral comments** will be accepted at the end of the workshop. 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.

**Written comments** may be submitted to the Docket Unit by 5:00 p.m. on April 14, 2025. Written 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 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](mailto: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

**Public Advisor.** The CEC's Public Advisor assists the public with participation in CEC proceedings. To request assistance, interpreting services, or reasonable modifications and accommodations, call

(916) 957-7910 or email [publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov](mailto:publicadvisor@energy.ca.gov) as soon as possible but at least five days in advance of the hearing. The CEC will work diligently to meet all requests based on availability.

**Direct questions of a procedural nature** to the assigned Hearing Officers:

- Reneé Webster-Hawkins, at [renee.webster-hawkins@energy.ca.gov](mailto:renee.webster-hawkins@energy.ca.gov) or (916) 237-2507.
- Ralph Lee, at [ralph.lee@energy.ca.gov](mailto:ralph.lee@energy.ca.gov) or (916) 776-3408.

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

- Eric Veerkamp, at [STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov](mailto:STEPsiting@energy.ca.gov) or (916) 661-8458.

**Direct media inquiries** to [mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov](mailto:mediaoffice@energy.ca.gov) or (916) 654-4989.

### **AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS**

The Status Conference will be transcribed by a court reporter. Information about the Application, 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: April 4, 2025

*Approved*

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

Dated: April 4, 2025

*Approved*

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