

## CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

CSA1 Bill Id:AB 531 Author:(Rogers)

As Amended Ver:September 05, 2025

Majority vote

**SUMMARY**

Expands the types of facilities eligible to be certified as environmental leadership development projects by the California Energy Commission (CEC) to include geothermal powerplants and projects that comprise multiple geothermal powerplants on a single site.

**Senate Amendments**

- 1) Expands the types of geothermal facilities eligible for certification by the CEC to include either a single geothermal powerplant or a project with multiple geothermal powerplants on one site.
- 2) Adds incorporation clause to prevent chaptering out conflict with SB 254 (Becker, 2025), which also amends PRC Section 25545.
- 3) Makes additional minor code clean up to remove outdated references to legislation.

**COMMENTS**

*Geothermal Energy* – Geothermal is a renewable energy source derived from heat within the earth. These resources consist of reservoirs of hot water, either naturally occurring or engineered, found at varying temperatures and depths below the surface. Wells, which may extend from a few feet to several miles deep, can access steam and hot water that are brought to the surface for electricity generation, direct heating, and industrial uses. The Geysers in Lake and Sonoma Counties, north of San Francisco, contain the largest concentration of geothermal plants in the nation, and California is pursuing further development in the Salton Sea region and Inyo County.

*AB 205 "Opt-in" Certification/permitting program.* AB 205 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 61, Statutes of 2022) broadened the CEC authority to oversee streamlined permitting for certain clean energy and renewable projects through an "opt-in" certification program, which is authorized until June 30, 2029. Under this program, the CEC serves as the lead agency for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review, preparing a comprehensive environmental assessment comparable to an environmental impact report (EIR).

The consolidated process is designed to complete environmental review and reach a certification decision within 270 days of deeming an application complete, subject to limited exceptions. Throughout the process, the CEC must ensure robust public engagement and tribal consultation, including outreach to local communities and California Native American tribes. To secure certification, applicants must demonstrate that the proposed project will provide a net economic benefit to the host community. This requirement includes entering into community benefits agreement, paying prevailing wages, and employing a skilled and trained workforce during construction. Therefore, if a developer submits an application, a certification from the CEC under AB 205 serves in lieu of most other state, local, or regional permits, streamlining the approval process.

**According to the Author**

According to the author, "Assembly District 2 is proudly home to a portion of "The Geysers," the largest geothermal field in the world. It contains a complex of 18 geothermal power plants, drawing steam from more than 350 wells, and is poised through the use of emerging new technologies to play an even larger role in California's clean energy mix. The expansion of geothermal energy production is an important component of our efforts to diversify and increase California's energy supply portfolio so we can reach our climate goals. This bill supports more efficient development of geothermal energy production, which will help enhance energy reliability and create more green energy jobs at the Geysers and beyond."

**Arguments in Support**

This bill is supported by labor groups, cities, community choice aggregators, and others who advocate for expanded development of geothermal resources in California. They recognize ongoing efforts to increase demand for geothermal energy in the state but caution that regulatory hurdles continue to drive many developers to locate projects in states such as Nevada and Utah, while still selling the power into the California market.

**Arguments in Opposition**

The Rural County Representatives of California oppose the bill, expressing concern that expanding the AB 205 program to include smaller geothermal projects would bypass local permitting authority. They argue that local governments are better equipped to address community needs and recommend amending the bill to require the governing body of the affected jurisdiction to adopt a letter of support before a project may proceed through the AB 205 process.

**FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, the CEC estimates ongoing annual costs of about \$241,000 for one position to conduct workshops, listening sessions, and maintain program guidelines. The CEC also notes it has not received new positions for the underlying program, and current work is being absorbed by temporarily funded resources. In addition, the bill creates cost pressures of an unknown but potentially significant amount to support capacity-building activities and grants for local and tribal communities.

**VOTES:****ASM UTILITIES AND ENERGY: 18-0-0**

**YES:** Petrie-Norris, Patterson, Boerner, Calderon, Chen, Davies, Mark González, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Kalra, Papan, Rogers, Schiavo, Schultz, Ta, Wallis, Zbur

**ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 14-0-0**

**YES:** Bryan, Alanis, Connolly, Ellis, Flora, Garcia, Haney, Hoover, Kalra, Muratsuchi, Pellerin, Schultz, Wicks, Zbur

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 13-0-2**

**YES:** Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Sanchez, Tangipa

**ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-0**

**YES:** Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

**UPDATED**

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