

SOUTH COAST AQMD
CLERK OF THE BOARD
2025 JUL -8 PM 3:49

BEFORE THE HEARING BOARD OF THE
SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

In the Matter of

WALNUT CREEK ENERGY LLC
[Facility ID No. 146536],

Petitioner,

v.

SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT.

Respondent.

Case No. 6230-2

**DECLARATION OF GEORGE
PIANTKA FOR EXTENSION OF
REGULAR VARIANCE PETITION;
FILED IN SUPPORT OF CONSENT
CALENDAR**

Hearing Date: July 10, 2025
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Place: South Coast Air Quality
Management District
21865 Copley Drive
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

PETITIONER: CASE NO. 6230-2
Exhibit No. 5 Consisting of 4 pages
Identification 7/10/25 Evidence _____

I, George Piantka, declare:

1. I am the Senior Director for NRG Energy, which operates Walnut Creek Energy ("Facility"). If called as a witness, I could testify to the following based on personal knowledge.

2. I am familiar with and have reviewed the petition for an extension of the final compliance date filed in Case no 6230-2, and I am familiar with the issues presented in the petition related to the start-up nitrogen oxides (NOx) mass emission requirements of the Facility's permit, including Permit Condition A195.7 on Facility Permit No. 146536 (Revision no. 9) (the revised "Title V Permit").

3. For the past 10 years I have served as the Senior Director of Regulatory Environmental Services at NRG Energy, which operates Walnut Creek Energy, a 500 MW natural gas-fired power plant powered by five (5) GE LMS100 simple cycle gas turbines. On January 31, 2024, the Facility was issued a Permit to Construct and Temporary Permit to Operate (PTC/TPTO) for an

Declaration of George Piantka

1 increase of the maximum heat input rate that will allow increased electrical generation to
2 California's power grid that would help address regional generation needs and improve system
3 grid reliability.

4 4. The PTC/TPTO contained a new Permit Condition A195.7 that applies to Gas Turbine
5 Units 1-5 (Devices D1, D7, D13, D19, D25). In the most recent permit modification to replace the
6 selective catalytic reduction (SCR) catalyst for each unit, the South Coast AQMD modified Permit
7 Condition A195.7 to include, for the first time, new NOx mass emission limits for start-up and
8 shutdown operations. The condition states that the new limits would take effect 90 days after the
9 completion of recommissioning for each unit following replacement of the SCR catalyst. This
10 limit was added to the Title V permit in the January 31, 2024 PTC/TPTO to enforce NOx
11 emission estimates for start-up operations assumed by the South Coast AQMD engineering staff
12 during initial facility permitting and used for emission calculation purposes.

13 5. The SCR catalysts for Units 1-5 were installed between February 18, 2024, and April
14 28, 2024. Following the start-up of the first unit, Unit 2, on February 27, 2024, after SCR
15 installation, the Facility reviewed continuous emissions monitoring system (CEMS) data and
16 determined that the NOx start-up mass emission limit identified in A195.7 could not be achieved.
17 Following start-up of Unit 3, a similar review of CEMS data also determined that compliance with
18 the new NOx startup limit could not be achieved. The Facility along with its consultant, Yorke
19 Engineering, compared the new start-up limit to other similar electrical generating units permitted
20 in the South Coast AQMD and found this limit to be lower and inconsistent with those permits. In
21 consultation with South Coast AQMD permitting staff, it was agreed that an increase in the NOx
22 start-up limit would be appropriate but that the change would have to be permitted through a
23 separate permitting action from the PTC/TPTO that was issued on January 31, 2024.

24 6. The Facility was granted a regular variance which provides relief from District Rules
25 2005, 2004(f)(1), 202(b), and 3002(c), and Conditions A195.7 of Facility Permit No. 146536
26 (Rev. 9) (Permit) as applicable to Device Nos. D1, D7, D13, D19, and D25. The Facility is unable
27 to comply with the final compliance date of July 15, 2025, and is requesting a 1-year extension
28 until July 15, 2026. Compliance is dependent on permit issuance of the WCE Title V permit that

1 includes the requested NOx start-up mass emissions increase. WCE is waiting for the updated
2 permit condition for the NOx start-up limit to be granted, as requested in Application Nos. 653918
3 – 653922, submitted on June 28, 2024.

4 7. South Coast AQMD permitting staff and I have worked diligently to comply with all
5 conditions of the variance. As outlined in Condition 1, the variance applies only to Permit
6 Condition A195.7, which limits NOx emissions during start-up to 7.0 lbs; this limit does not apply
7 during the variance period. The Facility has submitted monthly reports to the South Coast AQMD
8 on NOx mass emissions and other requested parameters (Condition 2), and has also provided the
9 required data for calendar year 2021 (Condition 3). In accordance with Condition 4, the Facility
10 has submitted Application Nos. 653918 - 653922 (one for each of the 5 sets of turbines and
11 emission control devices permitted at the Facility) on June 28, 2024. The applications to modify
12 the NOx mass emission limits were filed within the required 45 calendar days of the variance
13 being granted. Monthly reports showing NOx mass emissions have been prepared and submitted
14 according to the active variance. The Facility will notify the Clerk of the Board once final
15 compliance is achieved and the updated permit condition for the NOx start-up limit has been
16 granted (Condition 5). Additionally, the Facility has paid the required fees for excess NOx
17 emissions, with the initial payment made on August 31, 2024, and subsequent payments made
18 every 3 months thereafter (Condition 6).

19 8. Excess emission will continue to be mitigated through compliance with existing
20 natural gas throughput usage limits, and compliance with all other Title V mass emission limits.
21 The Facility is subject to a permitted natural gas fuel usage limit of no more than 20.7 MM cubic
22 feet per day per turbine. The Facility will continue to comply with this limit throughout the
23 variance period, and not exceed any existing permitted mass emission limit, other than the NOx
24 start-up limit for which relief is requested. The daily natural gas usage limit developed during
25 recent permitting actions to enforce potential to emit emissions under new source review based on
26 operating 24 hours per day at maximum turbine load (i.e., 100% fuel heat input rate). By
27 committing to operate below the daily natural gas fuel limit, the Facility will ensure that actual
28 emissions will remain less than permitted levels for all pollutants, including NOx. Moreover, the

1 Facility will continue to monitor NOx emissions during the variance period using a certified
2 continuous emission monitoring system (CEMS) for gas turbine Units 1-5.

3 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the
4 foregoing is true and correct. Executed this day of July 2, 2025, at City of Industry, California.

5
6 
7

8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

GEORGE PIANTKA