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State Water Resources Control Board

July 21, 2022

Ms. Betsy Brunswick  
Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
77 Beale Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
Sent via E-mail: [Betsy.Brunswick@pge.com](mailto:Betsy.Brunswick@pge.com)

**Spring Gap-Stanislaus Hydroelectric Project  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project No. 2130  
Tuolumne County  
Middle Fork Stanislaus River**

**APPROVAL OF AMENDED RELIEF REACH RIPARIAN VEGETATION  
RESTORATION AND STREAMBANK STABILIZATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION  
100% DESIGN LEVEL REPORT (RELIEF REACH RIPARIAN VEGETATION  
RESTORATION AND STREAMBANK STABILIZATION PLAN)**

Dear Ms. Brunswick:

On May 18, 2022, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) requested approval of the amended Relief Reach Riparian Vegetation Restoration and Streambank Stabilization Project Description 100% Design Level Report (Design Report) from the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Deputy Director of the Division of Water Rights (Deputy Director). The Design Report includes information on Phase II and Phase III requirements of the Relief Reach Riparian Vegetation Restoration and Streambank Stabilization Plan (Restoration Plan), which are required by Condition 9 of the July 16, 2009, water quality certification<sup>1</sup> (certification) issued for the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Hydroelectric Project (Project).

**BACKGROUND**

Condition 9 of the Project certification requires the development of environmental monitoring plans including the Restoration Plan. Condition 9 requires the Restoration Plan include three phases:

- Phase I involves the evaluation of existing information and development of recommendations for focused studies.
- Phase II involves performance of focused studies and development of recommended restoration actions.

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<sup>1</sup> Order WR 2009-0039.

- Phase III involves implementation of monitoring and/or restoration actions.

The Deputy Director approved the Restoration Plan on May 24, 2010. Restoration Plan Phase II and Phase III were not fully developed in the Restoration Plan as their completion was dependent on information collected during Phase I.

Following approval of the Restoration Plan, PG&E worked collaboratively with State Water Board, United States Forest Service (USFS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and United States Fish and Wildlife Service staff on the development and implementation of the Design Report as a means of completing the Phase II and Phase III requirements of the Restoration Plan. The Design Report details riparian vegetation restoration and streambank erosion control measures at seven treatment areas on the Middle Fork Stanislaus River below Relief Dam. These measures include riparian vegetation plantings and rock, large woody material, and root wad installations. Construction of five of the seven treatment areas was completed by October 2017, but construction of Treatment Areas 1 and 7 was delayed due to cost considerations.

On June 2, 2021, PG&E informed State Water Board staff that the Restoration Plan's success criteria of 1,885 linear feet of both increased riparian vegetation cover and streambank stability five years after construction completion could be met if Treatment Areas 1 and 7 were solely hand-planted with riparian vegetation (e.g., willow, alder, and cottonwood poles), without any rock, large woody material, or root wad installations.

On May 18, 2022, PG&E proposed to modify the planned restoration efforts for Treatment Areas 1 and 7 accordingly. In summary, PG&E's proposed revisions to the Design Report:

- Eliminate rock, large woody material, and root wad installation at Treatment Areas 1 and 7;
- Increase hand plantings at Treatment Area 1 from approximately 60 plantings to approximately 120 plantings; and
- Increase hand plantings at Treatment Area 7 from approximately 210 plantings to approximately 800 plantings.

On July 14, 2022, USFS issued a letter approving the modifications to the restoration efforts for Treatment Areas 1 and 7.

## **APPROVAL**

The amended Design Report, as provided on May 18, 2022, is hereby approved. PG&E shall complete the restoration work at Treatment Areas 1 and 7, and implement, as applicable, measures identified in the amended Design Report Appendix E, *Best Management Practice and Measures to Avoid, Protect, and Minimize Potential Resource Effects During Project Construction*. The performance criteria outlined in Appendix G, *Maintenance and Monitoring Plan*, of the Restoration Plan remains unchanged.

To support review and approval of PG&E's amended Design Report, the State Water Board developed a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) addendum to the 2017 Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) for the Relief Reach – Kennedy Meadows Riparian Restoration and Streambank Stabilization Project. The IS/ND analyzed potential environmental impacts associated with the 2016 Design Report, and the CEQA addendum evaluated potential environmental impacts associated with PG&E's proposed changes to Treatment Areas 1 and 7. The CEQA addendum determined no significant change would occur to the environmental impacts associated with PG&E's proposed changes to Treatment Areas 1 and 7. The CEQA addendum is enclosed for your records. The State Water Board will file a Notice of Determination with the Office of Planning and Research within five working days of issuance of this approval. (Cal. Code Regs., title 14, section 15096, subd. (i).)

PG&E shall file the amended Design Report with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Any further revisions to the amended Design Report shall be approved by the Deputy Director and filed with FERC prior to implementation.

If you have questions regarding this letter please contact Garrett Long, Project Manager, by email at: [Garrett.Long@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Garrett.Long@waterboards.ca.gov). Written correspondence should be directed to:

State Water Resources Control Board  
Division of Water Rights – Water Quality Certification Program  
Attn: Garrett Long  
P.O. Box 2000  
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Sincerely,



Erik Ekdahl, Deputy Director  
Division of Water Rights

Enclosure: Addendum to the Initial Study/Negative Declaration for Relief Reach-  
Kennedy Meadows Riparian Restoration and Streambank Stabilization  
Project

ec: Ms. Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
**Via e-filing to FERC Docket**

Mr. Mike Farmer, PG&E  
**Email: [M3FC@pge.com](mailto:M3FC@pge.com)**

Mr. Abimael León, CDFW  
**Email: [Abimael.Leon@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Abimael.Leon@wildlife.ca.gov)**

Ms. Betsy Brunswick

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July 21, 2022

Ms. Beth Lawson, CDFW

**Email:** [Beth.Lawson@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Beth.Lawson@wildlife.ca.gov)

Ms. Amy Lind, USFS

**Email:** [Amy.Lind@usda.gov](mailto:Amy.Lind@usda.gov)