
State Water Resources Control Board

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF RECIRCULATED DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY'S PIT 1 HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 2687

To: Interested Parties Mailing List

Notice is hereby given that the *Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Pit 1 Hydroelectric Project* (RDEIR) is available for public review and comment.

Background

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is requesting a water quality certification (certification) amendment from the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) for the Pit 1 Hydroelectric Project (Project) (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Project No. 2687). The amendment would remove the requirements to implement summer flushing flows and monitor their effectiveness for controlling aquatic vegetation growth and mosquito production (Conditions 13 and 14 of the certification), and add several new requirements related to whitewater boating flows and recreational site improvements.

Prior to issuing a certification amendment, the State Water Board must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.). The State Water Board, as lead agency for CEQA compliance, directed the preparation of an environmental impact report (EIR) for PG&E's amendment request in compliance with CEQA guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.). A draft EIR was issued in June 2017. The State Water Board is issuing the RDEIR since PG&E has updated the Project description in part. Comments on the 2017 draft EIR, although part of the administrative record, will not have written responses. **If interested parties have comments on the RDEIR, new comments must be submitted.**

When the State Water Board considers issuing a Project certification, it evaluates whether the Project will comply with the applicable water quality control plan (basin plan) and whether the beneficial uses of the water bodies covered by the basin plan will be protected. The Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards and, together with the State Water Board, Water Boards), and sometimes the State Water Board, prepare basin plans that designate the beneficial uses of waters to be protected

and establish the water quality objectives necessary to protect those uses, as required under section 303 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1313) and sections 13240 and 13241 of the Water Code. When establishing water quality objectives, the Water Boards consider: the past, present, and future beneficial uses of the water bodies; their environmental characteristics; economics; and water quality conditions that could be reasonably achieved through the coordinated control of the factors affecting water quality. Beneficial uses and water quality objectives for the Pit and Fall Rivers are designated in the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board's *Water Quality Control Plan for the California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Fifth Edition*.

The Pit 1 Hydroelectric Project

The Project is located on the Pit and Fall Rivers in Shasta County, upstream of PG&E's Pit 3, 4, and 5 Hydroelectric Project and McCloud-Pit Hydroelectric Project. The Project consists of a concrete diversion dam, the Pit 1 Powerhouse, and the Pit 1 Forebay. The Pit 1 Powerhouse has a capacity of 65.5 megawatts. Water is diverted from the Pit River to the Pit 1 Forebay on the Fall River and returned to the Pit River via the Pit 1 Powerhouse tailrace channel. In addition to power generation, the Project also provides opportunities for swimming, shoreline fishing, boating, waterskiing, picnicking, and camping.

The State Water Board issued a certification for the Project on December 4, 2001. The certification conditions were incorporated into the license issued by FERC on March 19, 2003.

Suspension of Summer Flushing Flows

Certification Condition 13 requires PG&E to implement summer flushing flows to control aquatic vegetation growth and mosquito production in Fall River Pond; Condition 14 requires PG&E to monitor the effectiveness of these flushing flows. PG&E implemented flushing flows between 2003 and 2009 and monitored the effectiveness from 2005 to 2008. Monitoring results indicated that the new minimum instream flows controlled aquatic vegetation growth and mosquito production, and the flushing flows were not necessary for this purpose.

On May 21, 2009, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service requested that the State Water Board suspend flushing flows due to concerns that the flows were contributing to the decline of Shasta crayfish (*Pacifastacus fortis*), a federally and state-listed endangered species. Subsequently, on June 4, 2009, PG&E applied for a certification amendment to remove the summer flushing flow and associated monitoring requirements. On August 28, 2009, the State Water Board informed PG&E that before an amendment to the certification can be considered, the State Water Board must comply with CEQA. PG&E and the State Water Board then entered a Memorandum of Understanding for preparation of an environmental document. On April 15, 2010, FERC staff, and subsequently PG&E as well, requested that the State Water Board temporarily suspend the flushing flow requirement through 2010. The State Water

Board issued Order WQ 2010-0009-EXEC on July 6, 2010, suspending flushing flows through 2011.

Annually, from 2012 through 2020, the State Water Board has issued temporary Orders extending the suspension of flushing flows at PG&E's request. These Orders allowed additional time for PG&E to complete hydrology and Shasta crayfish studies, for the State Water Board to complete CEQA amid and subsequent to California's historic drought. The State Water Board hopes to complete and consider the proposed certification amendment and CEQA document imminently.

Overview of the RDEIR

The State Water Board issued a draft EIR in June 2017 and received comments from PG&E and American Whitewater. Through consultation with American Whitewater, PG&E has added recreation improvements to the Project to improve public access and recreation opportunities (items (2) through (4) below).

The RDEIR evaluates PG&E's proposed amendment and three alternatives, including a No Project alternative. The proposed amendment would: (1) remove the certification requirement for summer flushing flows and associated monitoring; (2) require construction of 12 additional parking spaces to support increased daily recreation at specific sites; (3) require that whitewater releases be implemented during two weekends in October (instead of over four consecutive days); (4) require PG&E to annually consult with American Whitewater before scheduling whitewater flows; and (5) require PG&E refrain from conducting planned outages that result in spills between May 1 and September 30.

A lead agency must recirculate a draft EIR "when significant new information is added to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the draft EIR for public review." (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15088.5, subd. (a).) However, if only a few sections of the draft EIR were revised, the lead agency "need only recirculate the chapters or portions that have been modified." (*Id.*, subd. (c).) Accordingly, the RDEIR only analyzes impacts to resource areas affected by PG&E's subsequently added recreation measures. These resource areas include:

- Biological resources;
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural resources;
- Hydrology and Water Quality; and
- Recreation.

The RDEIR does not identify any significant impacts.

Public Review Period

The RDEIR comment period is from the date of this notice until **May 21, 2021**. **Comments on the RDEIR must be received by 5:00 pm on May 21, 2021**, and can be submitted electronically or by mail as follows:

Email: WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov

or

Mail:

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

The RDEIR and additional information regarding the Project are available on the [Project webpage](#), located online at:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/pit1_ferc2687.html

Document Availability

If you cannot access the RDEIR online, you can review hard copies at the locations below. **These documents will be available at the following locations no later than April 7, 2021**. Please note the days the locations are open are provided for convenience; locations may be closed on the indicated days for holidays or other reasons. **We encourage you to call and make an appointment to ensure the location is open and appropriate social distancing can be accommodated during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Redding Library
1100 Parkview Avenue
Redding, CA, 96001
(530) 245-7250
Monday – Thursday
10:00 am – 8:00 pm
Friday and Saturday
10:00 am – 6:00 pm

Central Valley Regional Water Quality
Control Board, Redding Office
364 Knollcrest Drive, Suite 2015
Redding, CA 96002
(530) 224-4845
Monday – Friday
8:00 am – 5:00 pm

KEEP INFORMED OF PROJECT MILESTONES

To receive emails related to the Project, interested persons should enroll in the “Water Rights Water Quality Certification” e-mail notification service. Instructions on how to sign up for the State Water Board’s Email Subscription List are outlined below:

1. Visit the [State Water Board’s email subscriptions webpage at:](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/swrcb_subscribe.html)
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/swrcb_subscribe.html
2. Provide your name and email in the required fields.
3. In the categories below the email and name fields, select “Water Rights,” then “Water Rights Water Quality Certification”
4. Click the "Subscribe" button.
5. An email will be sent to you. You must respond to the email message to confirm your membership on the selected list(s).

By enrolling in this email list, you will receive notices pertaining to the Division of Water Rights’ work on Water Quality Certification projects. If you do not have internet access or do not wish to participate in the email subscription list, you may contact Ms. Savannah Downey by phone at (916) 322-1585 to request to receive notices by mail. You can enroll or un-enroll from the email subscription service at any time.

If you have questions regarding this notice, please contact Project staff by email at WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Ann Marie Ore
Environmental Program Manager
Division of Water Rights

April 2, 2021
Date