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## State Water Resources Control Board

### NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND SCOPING MEETINGS FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE LAKE ELSINORE ADVANCED PUMPED STORAGE PROJECT FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 14227

To: Interested Parties Mailing List and Office of Planning and Research

Notice is hereby given that an environmental impact report will be prepared for the Lake Elsinore Advanced Pumped Storage Project (LEAPS Project).

#### **Notice of Preparation**

**Applicant:** Nevada Hydro Company, Inc.

**Project Name:** Lake Elsinore Advanced Pumped Storage Project

**Project Location:** Lake Elsinore and San Juan Creek in Riverside and San Diego Counties, near the city of Lake Elsinore, California.

#### **Project Description**

The proposed LEAPS Project would be operated as a 500 megawatt (MW) pumped storage facility to be located in Riverside County, California (see Figure 1) approximately midway between Los Angeles and San Diego at Lake Elsinore, California. Pumped storage projects<sup>1</sup> move water between two reservoirs located at different elevations (i.e., upper and lower reservoirs) to store energy and generate electricity. Generally, when electricity demand is low (e.g., at night), excess electric generation capacity is used to pump water from the lower reservoir to the upper reservoir. When electricity demand is high, the stored water is released from the upper reservoir to the lower reservoir through a turbine to generate electricity.

The proposed LEAPS Project would have two reservoirs, specifically: (1) construction of the new Decker Canyon reservoir (approximately 5,972 acre-feet), located approximately 9,500 feet southwest of Lake Elsinore that would serve as the upper reservoir; and (2) the existing Lake Elsinore that would serve as the lower reservoir. An underground powerhouse would be constructed immediately adjacent to Lake Elsinore, at the foot of the Elsinore Mountains. Access to the powerhouse will be by means of a vertical elevator from a structure located directly above the powerhouse. The powerhouse would include two single-stage reversible pump-turbine units. Power

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ferc.gov/industries-data/hydropower/licensing/pumped-storage-projects>

generated in the underground power plant will be transmitted to the surface by way of oil-filled cables along the side of the elevator shaft. An intake/outlet structure located in the upper reservoir will interconnect the reservoir with the powerhouse through a single approximately 25-foot diameter penstock bored into and through the Elsinore Mountains. The LEAPS Project would also involve the construction of 32 miles of transmission lines in the Cleveland National Forest and surrounding area.

### **Scoping Meetings**

The State Water Board will hold scoping meetings to provide information on the LEAPS Project, the water quality certification process, and to receive written or oral comments from agency personnel and other interested persons concerning the range of alternatives, potential significant effects, and mitigation measures that should be analyzed in the EIR. The time allotted for each individual or organization to provide oral comments may be limited if the number of people in attendance so requires. The scoping meetings will be documented by transcript.

**The scoping meetings will be held virtually via Zoom as follows:**

**Monday, March 8, 2021 from 2:00 – 4:30 pm**

Zoom Meeting Information:

<https://waterboards.zoom.us/j/94493855452?pwd=MytmQWFtaERqVkhGaVR3djNQVFdJUT09>

Call-in number: (669) 900-9128

Meeting ID: 944 9385 5452

Passcode: 049013

**Monday, March 8, 2021 from 5:00 – 7:30 pm**

Zoom Meeting Information:

<https://waterboards.zoom.us/j/96793067181?pwd=bzdBQ0lZV0c3Um92bTBxVzljDg4UT09>

Call-in Number: (669) 900-9128

Meeting ID: 967 9306 7181

Passcode: 699159

If you have additional questions concerning these meetings or would like to make a request for reasonable accommodations for a disability, please contact Chase Hildeburn by email at [chase.hildeburn@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:chase.hildeburn@waterboards.ca.gov).

### **Submittal of Written Comments**

The State Water Board is seeking comments from trustee agencies, responsible agencies, tribes, and interested persons concerning the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the environmental impact report. If possible, please provide the name and contact information for a person that may be contacted if there are questions about the comments. **The comment deadline is 5:00 pm on Tuesday, April 13, 2021.** Please send your comments to Mr. Chase Hildeburn at:

**Email:**[WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov)

or

**Mail:**

Mr. Chase Hildeburn  
State Water Resources Control Board  
Division of Water Rights – Water Quality Certification Program  
P.O. Box 2000  
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

**Water Quality Certification Process**

Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1341) requires every applicant for a federal license or permit that may result in a discharge into navigable waters to provide the federal licensing or permitting agency with certification that the project will be in compliance with state water quality standards and other relevant requirements of state law. Section 401 provides that conditions of certification shall become conditions of any federal license or permit for the project. The State Water Board is the agency in California that is responsible for section 401 water quality certifications (Wat. Code, § 13160; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 23, § 3855, subd. (b)).

When the State Water Board considers issuing a water quality certification for a project, it evaluates whether the project will comply with applicable water quality standards and other requirements of state law and determines conditions necessary to protect water quality. In California, water quality standards are established in regional water quality control plans (basin plans). Regional Water Quality Control Boards 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 California Water Code.

There may be water quality impacts associated with the construction and operation the LEAPS Project. Lake Elsinore is listed in California's 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies for dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), nutrients, organic enrichment/low dissolved oxygen, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and toxicity. San Juan Creek is listed for dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylene (DDE), nitrogen, phosphorus, benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments, dissolved oxygen, indicator bacteria, toxicity, and selenium.

The State Water Board may issue a water quality certification if it determines that a project will comply with specific federal Clean Water Act requirements (including water quality standards and implementation plans) and with other relevant requirements of state law. The State Water Board will determine whether construction and operation of the LEAPS Project adequately protects the beneficial uses and meets the water quality objectives for water bodies affected by the LEAPS Project, as defined in the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Santa Ana River Basin* and the *Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin* (Basin Plans), as well as other relevant standards.

**CEQA Information**

Issuance of a water quality certification is a “discretionary project” requiring compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.). The State Water Board, as lead agency under CEQA, is preparing a draft environmental impact report for the LEAPS Project.

***Environmental Factors Potentially Affected***

The State Water Board identified the following list of environmental factors potentially affected by the LEAPS Project.

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Green House Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic
- Tribal Cultural Resources<sup>2</sup>
- Wildfire

**Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Process**

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is the federal agency that regulates the construction, operation, and decommissioning of most non-federal hydroelectric dams in the United States. On October 2, 2017, Nevada Hydro Company, Inc. (Nevada Hydro) filed an application for a new license with FERC for the LEAPS Project. The LEAPS Project is also referred to as FERC Project No. 14227. Any conditions included in a State Water Board-issued water quality certification for the LEAPS Project will become conditions of any new FERC license issued for the LEAPS Project.

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<sup>2</sup> This resource area was added to CEQA in 2014 (Assembly Bill 52; Statutes 2014, Chapter 532, Gatto). Tribal governments on the State Water Board’s Assembly Bill 52 list were contacted in July 2020 and has initiated consultation with tribes that responded with an interest in consulting on the LEAPS Project. The State Water Board looks forward to working with California Native American Tribes to develop this analysis and any potential alternatives and mitigation measures.

***KEEP INFORMED OF PROPOSED PROJECT MILESTONES***

To receive emails related to the LEAPS Project and other projects pursuing certifications managed by the Division of Water Rights, 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:

[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 for other current projects in the Division of Water Rights' Water Quality Certification Program, including the LEAPS Project. If you do not have internet access or do not wish to participate in the email subscription list, you may contact Mr. Chase Hildeburn by phone at (916) 323-0358 to request to receive notices by mail. You can enroll or un-enroll from the email subscription service at any time.

**Questions and Additional Information**

During the current COVID-19 emergency, most State Water Board staff are working from home. Accordingly, if you have questions regarding this notice the best means of contact is by email. General questions regarding the water quality certification and California Environmental Quality Act process for the LEAPS Project should be directed to Mr. Chase Hildeburn by email at [chase.hildeburn@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:chase.hildeburn@waterboards.ca.gov).

Additional information regarding the LEAPS Project is available on the **State Water Board's LEAPS Project webpage** ([https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/water\\_quality\\_cert/leaps\\_14227.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/leaps_14227.html)).

Sincerely,

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Ann Marie Ore  
Water Quality Certification and Public Trust  
Program Manager  
Division of Water Rights

2/9/2021  
Date



Figure 1: Project Location and Facilities Map<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Source: Final Application for License of Major Unconstructed Project: Lake Elsinore Advanced Pumped Storage Project Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project Number 14227