



Media Release

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/>

San Francisco Public Utilities District Fined \$1 million for Water Quality Violations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SACRAMENTO – The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has agreed to pay a \$1 million penalty for unpermitted discharges from Priest Reservoir in Tuolumne County that harmed fish and wildlife habitat downstream.

Priest Reservoir is part of the San Francisco PUC's Hetch Hetchy Project, which delivers drinking water from Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite National Park to San Francisco. In the December 2011 incident, San Francisco PUC released approximately 54 million gallons of water and sediment from the Priest Dam outlet for inspection and valve repairs. The release caused high flows, turbidity, and up to nine inches of distinctive orange-yellow mud to accumulate on the banks of Rattlesnake Creek, Big Jackass Creek, and Moccasin Creek harming freshwater bottom-dwelling organisms and wildlife habitat along more than five miles of stream channels. The discharge is also believed to have caused or contributed to a fish kill below the dam.

The discharge of sediment violated both the California Water Code and the California Fish and Game Code. The maximum liability under the Water Code for the illegal discharge is \$67 million. The \$1 million penalty is the result of a settlement agreement reached by the Central Valley Regional Quality Control Board and the State Department of Fish and Wildlife with the San Francisco PUC to satisfy a jointly issued Administrative Civil Liability Order and Settlement Order.

Approximately \$530,000 of the payment will be used for environmental restoration projects, studies, and training. The remaining \$470,000 will be divided, with some of the funds going to the State Water Board's Cleanup and Abatement Account and the rest used to offset staff costs and pay statutory penalties.

In addition to the monetary penalties, the San Francisco PUC has agreed to reduce discharges of sediment when it is necessary to drain Priest Reservoir in the future.



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