
State Water Resources Control Board

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY, AND NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR RELICENSING OF THE BALCH HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 175

To: Trustee Agencies, Fresno County Clerk, and Interested Parties

On July 3, 2025, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Executive Director received a water quality certification (certification) application from Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing of the Balch Hydroelectric Project (Project) pursuant to section 401 of the Federal Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1341).

The State Water Board is the California Environmental Quality Act lead agency for the FERC relicensing of the Project and intends to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) to support the State Water Board's consideration and action on PG&E's request for certification. This information is provided to satisfy the formal written notice requirements for public review of an initial study (IS) and draft mitigated negative declaration (MND) (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15072). Notice is hereby given that the State Water Board is accepting comments on the IS/Draft MND for PG&E's proposed relicensing of the Project (Proposed Project).

Proposed Project Description

The Project is located on the North Fork Kings River in Fresno County, California, downstream of PG&E's Haas-Kings River Hydroelectric Project and Helms Pumped Storage Project. The Project is primarily operated as a peaking facility to generate power from water that is released from upstream storage to meet power demand and for irrigation purposes. All flow that passes through the Project's hydropower facilities are discharged back into the North Fork Kings River. The Project includes Balch Diversion Dam, Black Rock Reservoir, Balch Afterbay Dam, Balch Afterbay, two powerhouses (Balch No. 1 and Balch No. 2), transmission and distribution lines, and three developed recreation sites (Black Rock Campground, Black Rock Scenic Overlook, and Williams Creek Fishing Access).

The Proposed Project involves the FERC relicensing the 131.52-megawatt Balch Hydroelectric Project. PG&E has applied for a new FERC license for the Project (Proposed Project), under which it proposes to: (1) continue to operate the Project; (2) replace and rehabilitate existing recreation facilities; (3) designate approximately 14 miles of existing roads and approximately 2.5 miles of existing trails as Project roads and trails; (4) decommission the defunct Black Rock Creek and Weir Creek feeder

facilities; (5) modify the FERC Project boundary to more accurately define lands and waters necessary for Project operation and maintenance activities under a new FERC Project license; and (6) implement new protection, mitigation, and enhancement plans and measures. The Proposed Project is described further in the IS/Draft MND.

Comment Submittal and Deadline

The State Water Board is accepting comments on the Draft MND for the Proposed Project from the date of this notice through Friday, December 19, 2025. **Comments must be received by 5:00 pm on Friday, December 19, 2025.** Comments can be submitted as follows:

Email (preferred):

Jessica.Dyke@waterboards.ca.gov

or

Mail:

State Water Resources Control Board– Division of Water Rights
Water Quality Certification Program – Attention: Jessica Dyke
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

The IS/Draft MND is available on the State Water Board's [Balch Hydroelectric Project webpage](#).¹

If you cannot access the document online, hard copies of the IS/Draft MND for the Proposed Project will be available at the locations² below by no later than November 21, 2025:

Fresno County Library, Sanger Branch

1812 7th Street

Sanger, CA 93657

(559) 875-2435

Open Monday through Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

State Water Resources Control Board/CalEPA Building

1001 I Street,

2nd Floor Records Room, Room 2-114

Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 341-5300

Open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Appointments preferred.

Schedule an appointment by emailing: dwr@waterboards.ca.gov

¹ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/balch.html

² The hours of operation are provided as a courtesy and may vary for holidays or other reasons.

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

1685 "E" Street

Fresno, CA 93706

(559) 445-5116

Open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Appointment preferred.

Schedule an appointment by emailing:

info5@waterboards.ca.gov**STAY INFORMED**

To receive emails related to the Balch Hydroelectric Project relicensing 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 the [State Water Board's Email Subscription webpage](https://waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/).³
2. Provide your email in the required fields, then click the "Submit" button.
3. In the next page, below Subscription Topics, select "State Water Resources Control Board," then "Water Rights," and then "Water Rights Water Quality Certification".
4. Click the "Submit" button.
5. An email will be sent to you. You must respond to the email message to confirm your membership on the selected Topic(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 Helms Pumped Storage Project Relicensing. If you do not have internet access or do not wish to participate in the email notification list, you may contact Jessica Dyke by phone at: (916) 541-3448 and leave a message to request to receive notices by mail. You can enroll or un-enroll from the email notification service at any time.

If you have questions regarding this notice, please contact Jessica Dyke, Project Manager, by email to: Jessica.Dyke@waterboards.ca.gov, or by phone call to: (916) 341-5448.

Sincerely,



Erin Ragazzi
Assistant Deputy Director
Division of Water Rights

November 17, 2025

Date

³ https://waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/