
State Water Resources Control Board

NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND SCOPING MEETINGS FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE BISHOP CREEK HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT RELICENSING FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 1394

To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, California Native American Tribes, Interested Parties, and Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)¹, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) plans to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the Bishop Creek Hydroelectric Project Relicensing (Proposed Project).

Applicant: Southern California Edison Company

Project Name: Bishop Creek Hydroelectric Project Relicensing

Project Location: The Proposed Project is located on Bishop Creek, Green Creek, McGee Creek, and Birch Creek in Inyo County. The nearest city is Bishop, approximately 15 miles northeast of the Proposed Project's Sabrina Dam.

Overview

Southern California Edison Company (SCE) owns and operates the Bishop Creek Hydroelectric Project (Hydroelectric Project), which is licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The Proposed Project involves the relicensing (continued operation) of the existing Hydroelectric Project for a presumed 50-year term with proposed changes as described in the *Proposed Project Description* section below.

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 EIR. Please send comments to Annabelle Long, Hydroelectric Project Manager, at the address shown in the *Submittal of Written Comments* section below.

Description of the Existing Bishop Creek Hydroelectric Project

The Hydroelectric Project consists of: (1) five hydroelectric power plants (Power Plants 2-6) on Middle Fork Bishop Creek and Bishop Creek; (2) four diversions (Green Creek, South Fork, McGee Creek, and Birch Creek); (3) eight dams, some with associated flowlines, that divert water from South Fork Bishop Creek, Middle Fork Bishop Creek, Bishop Creek, Green Creek, Birch Creek, and McGee Creek to

¹ Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.

Hydroelectric Project facilities on Middle Fork Bishop Creek and Bishop Creek; (4) 17 stream gages; and (5) three primary storage reservoirs (South Lake, Lake Sabrina, and Longley Lake). SCE does not operate any recreational facilities as part of the Hydroelectric Project, but United States Forest Service (USFS)-managed recreation sites and informal recreation sites are located within or near the FERC boundary for the Proposed Project. These recreation sites include campgrounds, trailheads, day use sites, and boat launch facilities.

Under current Hydroelectric Project operations, water flows from Lake Sabrina through Sabrina Dam into Middle Fork Bishop Creek. Water also flows from South Lake through Hillside Dam into South Fork Bishop Creek. A portion of South Fork Bishop Creek is diverted by the South Fork Diversion into Middle Fork Bishop Creek where the creek is impounded by Intake No. 2 Dam and diverted into a flowline that runs parallel to Middle Fork Bishop Creek. This flowline combines with flowlines from Longley Lake, McGee Creek, and Birch Creek and supplies flow to Project impoundments and associated powerhouses on Bishop Creek, and powerhouses (see Figure 1. Project Location Map). The main Hydroelectric Project components are summarized below, generally from upstream to downstream:

- Green Creek Diversion: The Green Creek Diversion is located on Green Creek approximately 0.8 miles northeast of South Lake and has been out of service since 2008. The diversion consists of: (1) a 3-foot-long by 2-foot-high wooden head gate that diverts Green Creek water into a 1,400-foot-long open channel leading to the Green Creek Diversion intake; (2) an earth and rockfill 9-foot-high by 51-foot-long diversion dam equipped with a 12-foot-wide spillway (35 cubic feet per second [cfs] maximum capacity) and a 16-inch intake and drainpipe (15.3 cfs maximum capacity) that discharges to a conveyance system (4,750 feet long) that carries water to South Lake. The spillway discharges to an unnamed natural channel (1,150 feet long) that flows into South Fork Bishop Creek.
- Hillside Dam: Hillside Dam is located on the South Fork Bishop Creek, approximately 5.4 miles upstream from South Fork Diversion and impounds South Lake (usable storage capacity of 12,883 acre-feet). Hillside Dam is an 81-foot-high rockfill dam equipped with a 40-foot-long spillway (1,700 cfs maximum capacity) and an outlet system that discharges up to 178 cfs to South Fork Bishop Creek approximately 80 feet below the dam.
- South Fork Diversion: The South Fork Diversion is located on South Fork Bishop Creek approximately 1.8 miles south of the confluence of South Fork Bishop Creek with Middle Fork Bishop Creek. The diversion consists of: an earth and rockfill 10-foot-high dam equipped with: (1) a 40-foot-wide spillway (510 cfs maximum capacity) that discharges to South Fork Bishop Creek; (2) an outlet (85 cfs maximum capacity) that discharges to South Fork Bishop Creek; and (3) an outlet (30 cfs maximum capacity) that discharges to a 1.5-mile-long flowline that conveys water to the Intake No. 2 Dam impoundment.
- Longley Dam: Longley Dam is located at the headwaters of McGee Creek within the John Muir Wilderness approximately 5.6 miles northwest of Sabrina Dam. Longley Dam is a 27-foot-high by 120-foot-long earth and rockfill dam that impounds Longley Lake (usable storage capacity of 178 acre-feet). Longley Dam

is equipped with a spillway (65 cfs maximum capacity) and two low-level outlets (20 cfs combined maximum capacity) that discharge to McGee Creek.

- McGee Creek Diversion: McGee Creek Diversion is located on McGee Creek, approximately 1.9 miles downstream of Longley Dam. McGee Creek Diversion is a 22-foot-long by 8-foot-high stone and concrete dam equipped with: (1) a 12-foot-wide spillway (35 cfs maximum capacity) that discharges to McGee Creek; (2) two outlets (15 cfs combined maximum capacity) that discharge to McGee Creek; and (3) an approximately 0.6-mile flowline that discharges to an unnamed tributary to Birch Creek upstream of the Birch Creek Diversion.
- Birch Creek Diversion: Birch Creek Diversion is located on Birch Creek, approximately 4.7 miles north of Sabrina Dam and consists of: (1) a 12-foot-long by approximately 9-foot-high stone and concrete dam equipped with: (1) a 5-foot-wide spillway (40 cfs maximum capacity); (2) an intake/discharge structure (15 cfs maximum capacity) that discharges to Birch Creek and to a flowline; and (3) an approximately 1.8-mile-long flowline (40 cfs maximum capacity) that discharges to Flowline No. 2.
- Sabrina Dam: Sabrina Dam is located on Middle Fork Bishop Creek, approximately 3.3 miles upstream from Intake 2 Dam, and impounds Lake Sabrina (usable storage capacity of 7,350 acre-feet). Sabrina Dam is a 70-foot-high by 900-foot-long rockfill dam equipped with two ungated spillways (combined maximum discharge capacity of 3,700 cfs); and (2) three low-level outlets (300 cfs combined maximum capacity) that discharge to Middle Fork Bishop Creek.
- Intake No. 2 Dam, Flowline No. 2, and Powerhouse No. 2: Intake No. 2 Dam is located on Middle Fork Bishop Creek, approximately 3.1 miles downstream of Sabrina Dam. Intake No. 2 Dam is a 443-foot-long by 43-foot-high earthen and concrete dam equipped with two ungated spillways (350 cfs combined maximum capacity) and two low-level outlets (85 cfs combined maximum capacity). Flowline/Penstock No. 2 begins at a concrete intake structure below Intake No. 2 Dam and continues 1.85 miles to Powerhouse No. 2. Flowline/Penstock No. 2 has a maximum diversion capacity of 140 cfs.

Powerhouse No. 2 is located on Bishop Creek approximately two miles downstream of Intake No. 2 Dam. Powerhouse No. 2 has three impulse turbines with a total maximum dependable operating capacity of 7.32 megawatts (MWs) with a hydraulic operation range of 5 to 135 cfs. A non-project switchyard and Hydroelectric Project transformer house are located adjacent to Powerhouse No. 2.

- Intake No. 3 Dam, Flowline No. 3, and Powerhouse No. 3: Intake No. 3 Dam impounds tailwater from Intake No. 2 Dam and is located on Bishop Creek immediately downstream of Powerhouse No. 2. Intake No. 3 Dam is a 225-foot-long by 20-foot-high concrete dam equipped with a 40-foot-long spillway (250 cfs capacity); two outlet pipes that discharge to Bishop Creek (70 cfs combined maximum capacity), and three outlet pipes that divert water to Flowline No. 3. Flowline No. 3 is approximately 3.1 miles long with a maximum capacity of 180 cfs and discharges to Powerhouse No. 3.

Powerhouse No. 3 is located on Bishop Creek approximately 3.25 miles downstream of Intake No. 3 Dam. Powerhouse No. 3 has three turbines with a maximum dependable operating capacity of 8.25 MWs, and hydraulic operations range of 6 and 165 cfs. Powerhouse No. 3 has a switchyard with an associated 3.1-mile transmission line that extends to a non-Hydroelectric Project substation.

- Intake No. 4 Dam, Flowline/Penstock, and Powerhouse: Intake No. 4 Dam impounds the tail water from Powerhouse No. 3 on Bishop Creek immediately downstream of Powerhouse No. 3. Intake No. 4 Dam is a 323-foot-long by 28-foot-high concrete dam equipped with a 50-foot-wide spillway (290 cfs maximum capacity) and two outlet pipes (75 cfs combined maximum capacity) that discharge to Bishop Creek and Flowline No. 4. Flowline No. 4 is approximately 1.2 miles long with a maximum capacity of 133 cfs. The flowline bifurcates into two approximately one-mile-long penstocks that discharge to Powerhouse No. 4.

Powerhouse No. 4 is located on Bishop Creek approximately 2.4 miles downstream of Intake No. 4 Dam. Powerhouse No. 4 has five turbines with a maximum dependable operating capacity of 7.95 MWs and a hydraulic operation range of 2 to 125 cfs. A switchyard is located adjacent to the powerhouse.

- Intake No. 5 Dam, Flowline No. 5, and Powerhouse No. 5: Intake No. 5 Dam impounds the tail water from Powerhouse No. 4 on Bishop Creek. Intake No. 5 Dam is a 220-foot-long by 20-foot-high concrete dam equipped with a 60-foot-wide spillway (310 cfs maximum capacity), an outlet pipe (70 cfs maximum capacity), and an intake system that diverts to Flowline No. 5. Flowline No. 5 is approximately 1.4 miles long with a maximum capacity of 158 cfs. Flowline No. 5 discharges to Powerhouse No. 5.

Powerhouse No. 5 is located on Bishop Creek approximately 1.7 miles downstream of Intake No. 5 Dam. Powerhouse No. 5 has two turbines with a maximum dependable operating capacity of 3.8 MWs and a hydraulic operations range of 41 to 130 cfs. There are no transmission facilities associated with Powerhouse No. 5.

- Intake No. 6 Dam, Flowline No. 6, and Powerhouse No. 6: Intake No. 6 Dam impounds the tail water from Powerhouse No. 5 on Bishop Creek immediately downstream of Powerhouse No. 5. Intake No. 6 Dam is a 320-foot-wide by 26-foot-high concrete dam equipped with a 60-foot-wide spillway (250 cfs maximum capacity), two drainage pipes (95 cfs combined maximum capacity) that discharge to Bishop Creek, and an outlet pipe that discharges to Flowline No. 6. Flowline No. 6 is approximately 1.3 miles long with a maximum capacity of 133 cfs. Flowline No. 6 discharges to Powerhouse No. 6.

Powerhouse No. 6 is located on Bishop Creek approximately 3,000 feet downstream of Intake No. 6 Dam. Powerhouse No. 6 has a single turbine with a maximum dependable operating capacity of 1.6 MWs and a hydraulic operations range of 9 to 150 cfs. Powerhouse No. 6 is equipped with a switchyard and 640-foot-long transmission line.

Proposed Project Description

SCE is requesting to relicense the Hydroelectric Project. SCE did not request a particular license term, as such this CEQA analysis assumes a 50-year term (the maximum relicensing term provided by FERC). The Proposed Project involves continued operations and maintenance with the following changes:

- **Proposed Project Boundary Updates**

The Proposed Project includes an overall increase in the FERC boundary from 1,065.4 acres to 1,081.5 acres. The Proposed Project boundary would include 733 acres of USFS-managed land, 47.6 acres of Bureau of Land Management-managed land, and 300.9 acres of non-federal owned land. Proposed Project boundary changes are as follows:

- Minor changes to boundaries around creeks, access roads, and Hydroelectric Project transmission line centerlines based on improved aerial imagery.
- Addition of existing Hydroelectric Project roads throughout the Proposed Project area that were not previously included in the FERC boundary.
- Shift of Green Creek Diversion Pipeline boundary from historical pipeline to the existing natural water course.

- **Proposed Project Measures**

The Proposed Project includes new measures and plans designed to protect, maintain, and enhance environmental, recreational, and cultural resources during the new FERC license term. Proposed measures and plans related to resource areas include:

- Water Management: This measure includes:
 - An annual consultation requirement with USFS and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to discuss: annual construction and maintenance activities; timing, duration, and magnitude of brown trout redd disruption flows; and implementation of geomorphic flows based on forecasted water year type;
 - New minimum instream flows;
 - Brown trout redd disruption flows to enhance native fisheries by providing two short-duration pulse flows annually except during dry years;
 - Geomorphic flows between April and August in wet years of 300 cfs for 12 hours; and
 - Recession flows during wet water years to manage the descending limb of the annual hydrograph. Additionally, SCE will provide USFS and CDFW with a proposal for recession flows during a normal water year if: (1) no recession flows have been provided for two consecutive years; and (2) the forecasted flow is at least 115 percent of the normal water year.
- Sediment Management Plan: This measure includes development of a Sediment Management Plan to identify baseline turbidity, ensure compliance with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's *Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region* (Basin Plan). This plan includes establishing a schedule and methods for managing sediment releases, providing an overview of mechanical sediment removal methods, and describing coordination with downstream water managers.

- Fish Stocking Plan: This plan includes a commitment to stock 5,000 catchable trout or its equivalent in the Project area annually.
- Wildlife Resources Management Plan: This plan includes continued implementation of SCE's Avian Protection Plan, Nesting Bird Management Guidance for Small Projects, Pre-Activity Nesting Bird and Raptor Surveys, and continued maintenance of existing wildlife crossings and guzzlers, and protective activities for at-risk wildlife species.
- Botanical Resources Management Plan: This plan includes protection measures if non-routine operations and maintenance activities disturb or otherwise impact special status plants over the term of the new FERC license.
- Invasive Species Management Plan: This plan lists and prioritizes invasive species known to occur within the Proposed Project boundary; describes SCE's existing best management practices for preventing introduction and dispersal of invasive species; and describes measures for control or eradication of invasive plant species at specific target areas.
- Recreation Resources Management Plan: This plan will:
 - Ensure public access to recreation facilities located within or adjacent to the Hydroelectric Project, which include recreation facilities and informal uses associated with South Lake, Lake Sabrina, and Intake No. 2 Reservoir.
 - Incorporate necessary lands within the Project boundary for recreation facility management activities.
 - Describe access to Project facilities that SCE will improve or restore to acceptable accessibility standards, as needed.
 - Provide for proportional cost-sharing with USFS to support recreation, as well as natural and cultural resource management in the Inyo National Forest.
 - Create a structure retaining USFS management and operations through an operating agreement regarding the USFS facilities for which SCE is responsible.
 - Address ways that SCE can collaborate with the USFS to manage prohibited activities around the reservoirs, which are primarily outside of the FERC Project boundary (e.g., dispersed camping in wilderness or below the high-water mark at Lake Sabrina and South Lake).
- Historic Properties Management Plan: This plan describes the guidelines for monitoring archaeological sites as well as procedures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate direct and indirect effects to National Register of Historic Places eligible or listed resources.
- **Proposed Project Operations Updates**

The Green Creek Diversion has been out of service since October 2008. Under the Proposed Project, the Green Creek Diversion would be returned to service, providing for additional water to be diverted from Green Creek into South Lake.

Potential Longley Lake Wilderness Act Conflict

In its 2022 Final License Application for the Project, SCE stated that both Longley Lake and Longley Dam are located in the John Muir Wilderness Area. On March 16, 2023,

FERC staff requested clarification from USFS regarding its position on FERC's authority to relicense Project facilities in a designated wilderness area. On April 18, 2023, USFS responded, stating that Longley Dam and Longley Lake were in conflict with the Wilderness Act of 1964. FERC subsequently determined that decommissioning of Longley Lake and Longley Dam is a reasonably foreseeable alternative that would need to be analyzed and requested additional information from SCE to evaluate the effects of potential decommissioning of these facilities. In this case, decommissioning of Longley Lake and Longley Dam would likely be analyzed as a Proposed Project Alternative.

Virtual Scoping Meetings

The State Water Board will hold two virtual scoping meetings to provide information about the Proposed Project, the CEQA process, and to receive written or oral comments from trustee agencies, responsible agencies, Tribes, 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 person to provide oral comments may be limited if the number of people requesting to comment so requires. Scoping meetings will conclude after all interested persons have provided their comments. The scoping meetings will be recorded and documented by transcript.

Details of the scoping meetings are provided below. **You must register to attend the virtual meetings using the links below. Once you register, you will receive an email with a meeting invite.**

Thursday, October 15, 2026

Starting at 12:00 p.m.

Registration Link:

<https://waterboards.zoom.us/meeting/register/kduyWzi1SnuLbRSGsGDdcw>

Thursday, October 15, 2026

Starting at 5:30 p.m.

Registration Link:

https://waterboards.zoom.us/meeting/register/CKSCS6IoSVaQoAS_c2qphg

Each scoping meeting will conclude after all interested persons have provided their comments.

This is not a State Water Board meeting. It is possible that one or more State Water Board members may attend the virtual meeting; however, no State Water Board deliberation or action will take place. A quorum of the State Water Board will not be present.

If you have questions related to these meetings or would like to make a request for reasonable accommodations for a disability, please email:

wr401program@waterboards.ca.gov or call Annabelle Long, Hydroelectric Project Manager, at: (916) 327-8555.

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 EIR. Please provide the name and contact information for a person that may be contacted if there are questions about the comment(s). **The comment deadline is 4:00 pm on Friday, October, 30, 2026.** Please title your comments as “Bishop Creek NOP Comments” and send them to Annabelle Long, Hydroelectric Project Manager, by:

Email (preferred):

wr401program@waterboards.ca.gov

or

Mail to:

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

Additional Information regarding the Proposed Project is available on the State Water Board’s [Bishop Creek Hydroelectric Project webpage](#)².

State Water Board’s Water Quality Certification Authority and 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 comply with state water quality standards and other appropriate 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 issuing section 401 certifications for hydroelectric facilities licensed by FERC. (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 appropriate 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 and state water quality control plans or policies. Water quality control plans 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.

The State Water Board may issue a certification if it determines that the Proposed Project will comply with specified provisions of the Clean Water Act, including water quality standards and implementation plans, and other appropriate requirements of state law. The State Water Board must determine whether the Proposed Project adequately protects the beneficial uses and meets the water quality objectives.

² https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/bishop_creek.html. Last accessed: February 25, 2026.

Beneficial uses and water quality objectives are listed in the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's *Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region* (Basin Plan). Additional information concerning the Basin Plan and designated beneficial uses are available at the [Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's Basin Plan webpage](#)³.

CEQA Information

Issuance of a water quality certification is a “discretionary action” requiring compliance with CEQA. The State Water Board, as lead agency under CEQA, plans to prepare a draft EIR for the Proposed Project.

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The EIR will evaluate potentially significant impacts of the Proposed Project for a range of resource areas. The State Water Board has identified the following list of environmental factors potentially affected by the Proposed Project.

- **Biological Resources**
 - The Proposed Project has the potential to affect, either directly or through habitat modifications, species identified as threatened, endangered, candidate, sensitive, or special status in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFW or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- **Hydrology/Water Quality**
 - The Proposed Project has the potential to exceed water quality standards or waste discharge requirements.
- **Recreation**
 - The Proposed Project has the potential to increase recreational activities which may have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

Alternatives

Due to the potential conflict of Longley Lake and Longley Dam with the Wilderness Act of 1964, decommissioning of Longley Lake and Longley Dam may be analyzed as a Proposed Project Alternative. This alternative may potentially result in impacts to: Aesthetics, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Tribal Cultural Resources, Energy, Geology and Soils, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology, Noise, and Recreation.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Process

FERC is the federal agency that regulates the construction, operation, and decommissioning of most non-federal hydroelectric dams in the United States. On June 29, 2022, SCE filed a final license application for the Proposed Project with FERC, which SCE has supplemented in later FERC filings. Any conditions included in a State Water Board-issued certification for the Proposed Project will become conditions of any new FERC license issued for the Hydroelectric Project.

³ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahtontan/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/references.html. Last accessed: February 25, 2026.

KEEP INFORMED OF PROPOSED PROJECT MILESTONES

To receive emails related to the Hydroelectric 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 the [State Water Board's Email Subscription webpage](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/) at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/
2. Click "State Water Resources Control Board" and provide your email in the required fields, then click the "Submit" button.
3. In the next page, below Subscription Topics, select "Water Rights," 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 Bishop Creek Hydroelectric Project. You can enroll or un-enroll from the email notification service at any time. If you do not have internet access or do not wish to participate in email notifications, you may contact Annabelle Long by phone call to: (916) 327-8555 to request to receive notices by mail.

Questions and Additional Information

If you have questions regarding this notice the best means of contact is by email. General questions regarding the water quality certification and CEQA processes for the Proposed Project should be directed to Annabelle Long, Hydroelectric Project Manager, by email to: Annabelle.Long@waterboards.ca.gov, or by phone call to: (916) 327-8555.

Sincerely,

Parker Thaler
Parker Thaler
Water Quality Certification Program Manager
Division of Water Rights

9/23/26
Date

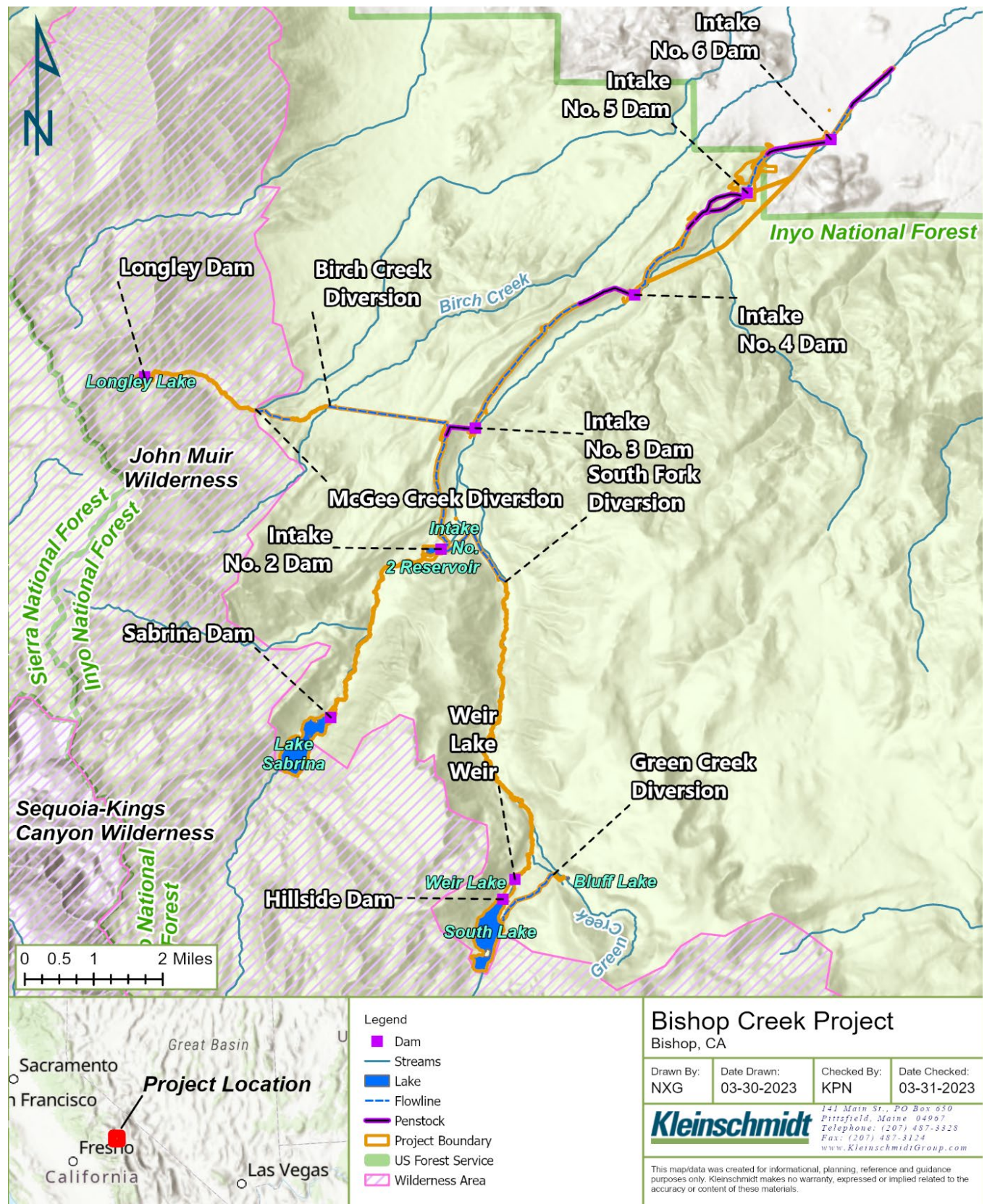


Figure 1. Project Location Map