
State Water Resources Control Board

APR 09 2018

To: FERC Service List P-2687

NOTICE OF REQUEST TO EXTEND THE TEMPORARY SUSPENSION FLUSHING FLOWS, PIT 1 HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT, FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 2687; SHASTA COUNTY

On February 7, 2018, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) submitted a letter requesting a one-year extension of the suspension of flushing flows for the Pit 1 Hydroelectric Project (Project), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) Project No. 2687. The extension request is to support the objectives described in prior requests while the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) completes its California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis of the potential environmental impacts of permanently eliminating the required flushing flows. If approved, PG&E would continue the temporary suspension of flushing flows in the Pit 1 Bypass Reach for a limited amount of time while the CEQA analysis is completed.

On June 24, 2009, PG&E submitted a request to the State Water Board to amend the Project water quality certification to remove Conditions 13 (flushing flows) and 14 (flushing flow effectiveness monitoring). Condition 13 of the water quality certification requires PG&E to release flushing flows during three weekends in May or June, July, and August. The flows are designed to reduce nuisance vegetation and control mosquito populations in Fall River Pond. By letter dated August 28, 2009, State Water Board staff notified PG&E that before an amendment of the water quality certification can be considered, the State Water Board must comply with CEQA. In a letter dated December 17, 2009, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff stated that flushing flows are likely resulting in take and are facilitating the decline of the endangered Shasta crayfish in the Pit 1 Bypass Reach.

On April 15, 2010, the State Water Board received a request from the Commission to temporarily suspend the flushing flow requirements in the Project's water quality certification, issued on December 4, 2001. The water quality certification conditions were incorporated into the license issued by the Commission on March 19, 2003. On July 6, 2010, the State Water Board issued Order WQ 2010-0009-EXEC, which temporarily amended the water quality certification to suspend flushing flows for two years (i.e., for 2010 and 2011).

On March 22, 2012, PG&E submitted a letter requesting an extension of the suspension of flushing flows for one additional year for the Project to allow for implementation of the Shasta crayfish study plan and completion of the CEQA analysis. On June 14, 2012, the State Water Board issued Order WQ 2012-0008-EXEC approving the temporary suspension of flushing flow requirements through 2012. PG&E issued the final Pit 1 Hydroelectric Project Shasta Crayfish Study Report on January 31, 2013.

State Water Board staff's work on the CEQA document was delayed from 2013 through 2016 during California's historic drought. On March 28, 2013, April 21, 2014, March 19, 2015, and March 31, 2016, PG&E submitted letters requesting additional one-year extensions to the suspension of Project flushing flows to allow for the completion of the draft environmental impact report (EIR) required by CEQA. USFWS provided letters of support on May 17, 2013, April 21, 2014, March 19, 2015, and June 9, 2016, respectively. On June 20, 2013, June 12, 2014, June 23, 2015, and June 28, 2016, the State Water Board issued Orders WQ 2013-0024-EXEC, WQ 2014-0023-EXEC, WQ 2015-0076-EXEC, and WQ 2016-0072-EXEC, respectively, approving the temporary suspension of flushing flow requirements through 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016.

In a letter dated April 18, 2017, PG&E requested a one-year extension of the suspension of flushing flows through 2017, to allow for completion of the CEQA process and issuance of the certification amendment. USFWS supported PG&E's request in a letter dated June 13, 2017. On June 27, 2017, the State Water Board issued Order WQ 2017-0014-EXEC extending the temporary suspension of flushing flows through calendar year 2017.

The State Water Board released the draft CEQA document for public comment from June 26, 2017 through August 15, 2017. Because the draft CEQA document will not be finalized prior to the timeframe for implementing required 2018 flushing flows, PG&E requested a one-year extension of the suspension of flushing flows through calendar year 2018.

Additional information on this Project, including copies of the requests, can be found on the Project webpage, which is available at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/pit1_ferc2687.shtml.

California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3838 authorizes the Executive Director for the State Water Board to take all actions connected with applications for water quality certification. This letter serves as notice that pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3858, the State Water Board is taking action on the request to extend the temporary suspension of the flushing flow requirements.

If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact me at (916) 341-5369 or by email at Meiling.Colombano@waterboards.ca.gov. Written correspondence can be directed as follows: State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights, Water Quality Certification Program, Attn: Meiling Colombano, P.O. Box 2000, Sacramento, CA 95812-2000.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

Meiling Colombano, Environmental Scientist
Water Quality Certification Program
Division of Water Rights

Enclosure: Pit 1 (FERC No. 2687) Interested Parties Mailing List

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