

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
Washington, D. C. 20426

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 77-332–California
Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project
Pacific Gas and Electric Company

May 22, 2026

VIA FERC Service

Subject: Scoping Document 1 for the proposed Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project
surrender and decommissioning

The Commission is reviewing Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) application for surrender and decommissioning of the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project No. 77, as well as the proposed non-project use of project lands to construct a New Eel-Russian Facility (NERF) for the purpose of water diversion through some of the project's existing infrastructure for non-project uses. The project is located on the Eel River and East Fork of the Russian River in Lake and Mendocino counties, California. The project occupies federal lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Mendocino National Forest.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, Commission staff will prepare either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement (collectively referred to as the "NEPA document"), which will be used by the Commission to determine whether, and under what conditions, to authorize surrender and decommissioning of the project, as well as the proposed non-project use of project lands. To support and assist our environmental review, Commission staff are beginning the public scoping process to ensure pertinent issues are identified and analyzed, and that our NEPA document is thorough and balanced. The Commission's scoping process will satisfy the NEPA scoping requirements.

Commission staff invite your participation in the scoping process and are circulating the attached Scoping Document 1 (SD1) to provide you with information on the project. We are also soliciting your comments and suggestions on our preliminary list of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the NEPA document.

We will hold two in-person scoping meetings to receive comments on the scope of the NEPA document:

Evening Scoping Meeting

DATE: Tuesday, June 23, 2026

TIME: 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Pacific Time (PT)

PLACE: Ukiah Valley Conference Center, Chenin Blanc Room

ADDRESS: 200 South School Street, Ukiah, CA 95482

Daytime Scoping Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, June 24, 2026

TIME: 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m (PT)

PLACE: Ukiah Valley Conference Center, Chenin Blanc Room

ADDRESS: 200 South School Street, Ukiah, CA 95482

We invite all interested agencies, Native American Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals to attend. Further information on the scoping meetings is available in the enclosed SD1.

The SD1 notice is being distributed to the Commission's official mailing list (see section 7.0 Mailing List) and to PG&E's distribution list. If you wish to be added to or removed from the Commission's official mailing list, please send your request by email to FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or via mail. Submissions sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. Submissions sent via any other carrier must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20852. All written or emailed requests must specify your wish to be added to, or removed from, the mailing list and must clearly identify the following on the first page: **Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project No. P-77-332.**

Please review SD1 and, if you wish to provide comments for the purposes of scoping, follow the instructions in section 5.0, Request for Information. If you have any questions about SD1, the scoping process, or how Commission staff will develop the NEPA document for this project, please contact Diana Shannon at (202) 502-6136 or via email at diana.shannon@ferc.gov. Additional information about the Commission and the project may be obtained from the Commission's website, at <http://www.ferc.gov>. The deadline for filing scoping comments is **on or before 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on July 24, 2026.** The Commission encourages electronic filings.

Enclosure: Scoping Document 1

SCOPING DOCUMENT 1

POTTER VALLEY HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT NO. 77-332

CALIFORNIA



Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Office of Energy Projects
Division of Hydropower Administration and Compliance
Washington, DC

May 2026

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SCOPING DOCUMENT 1

Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project No. 77-332

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission or FERC), under the authority of the Federal Power Act (FPA),¹ licenses and oversees the operation of non-federal hydroelectric projects in the United States. Section 6 of the FPA allows licensees to surrender existing licenses and cease operation of their project upon mutual agreement between the licensee and the Commission.

Under the Commission's regulations at 18 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 6.2, a license may be surrendered only when the licensee has fulfilled those obligations that are prescribed by the Commission. Where project works have been constructed on lands of the United States, the licensee is required to restore the lands to a condition satisfactory to the Department having supervision over such lands and annual charges will continue until such restoration has been satisfactorily completed.

1.1 Background

The 9.96-megawatt Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project is located on the Eel River and East Fork of the Russian River in Lake and Mendocino counties, California, approximately 15 miles northeast of the City of Ukiah, California (Figure 1). The project occupies federal lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Mendocino National Forest. The Commission issued a 40-year license for the project to Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E or licensee) on October 4, 1983, which expired on April 14, 2022.²

On April 6, 2017, PG&E filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) and Pre-Application Document (PAD), and informed the Commission of its intent to relicense the project. On January 25, 2019, PG&E filed a notice of withdrawal of its NOI and PAD to relicense the project, which became effective on February 11, 2019. On March 1, 2019, Commission staff issued notice of PG&E's withdrawal of its intent to file a license application and solicited other potential applicants to file NOIs and PADS, and requests to complete the remaining pre-filing stages of the integrated licensing process (ILP).

¹ United States Code (U.S.C.) § 791(a)-825(r).

² *Pacific Gas and Electric Company*, 25 FERC ¶ 61,010 (1983). As amended by *Pacific Gas and Electric Company*, 106 FERC ¶ 61,065 (2004). The project is operating under annual license, issued on April 21, 2022. See FERC Accession No. 20220421-3034.

On June 28, 2019, Mendocino County Inland Water Agency and Power Commission; Sonoma County Water Agency; California Trout, Inc.; and the County of Humboldt, California (NOI Parties) collectively filed an NOI to file an application for new license for the project.³ On August 1, 2019, staff issued public notice of the NOI Parties' intent to continue the licensing process and file a final license application by April 14, 2022. On September 2, 2021, the NOI Parties filed a request that the Commission place in abeyance the schedule for the ILP until May 31, 2022. On September 23, 2021, Commission staff reiterated the April 14, 2022 deadline to file a license application. Ultimately, the NOI Parties did not file a license application.

However, on April 15, 2022, PVP 77 LLC (PVP) filed a license application⁴ that Commission staff rejected as untimely and patently deficient by letter issued April 22, 2022. PVP filed a request for rehearing on April 25, 2022. Those issues were addressed in the Commission's order issued July 5, 2022,⁵ which denied rehearing.

With no adequate license applications filed for the project, on May 11, 2022, Commission staff requested PG&E file a plan and schedule for the filing of a surrender application. PG&E responded on July 8, 2022, and proposed to file a surrender application within 30 months of the Commission's approval of the schedule. On July 29, 2022, the Commission approved this schedule, establishing a due date for filing the surrender application by January 2025. On June 6, 2024, PG&E requested additional time (i.e., until July 29, 2025) to file the application. On July 1, 2024, Commission staff granted this extension of time. After pre-filing consultation with federal and state resource agencies, Tribes, and other interested parties beginning in November 2023, PG&E filed its surrender application with the Commission on July 25, 2025.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA),⁶ the Commission's regulations, and other applicable laws require that we independently evaluate the environmental effects of surrendering the project license as proposed, as well as consider a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed action. The Commission intends to

³ The NOI Parties indicated they were filing the NOI as proxies for a new Regional Entity that would eventually be the license applicant for the project.

⁴ PVP's application for license was given Project No. 15273.

⁵ *PVP 77 LLC*, 180 FERC ¶ 61,007 (2022).

⁶ 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*; *see also* 18 C.F.R. pt. 380 (2025) (Commission's regulations implementing NEPA); FERC, Staff Guidance Manual on Implementation of NEPA (June 2025), <https://www.ferc.gov/media/staff-guidance-manual-implementation-national-environmental-policy-act-june-2025s..>

develop either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement (collectively referred to as the “NEPA document”) that describes and evaluates the probable effects, including an assessment of the site-specific and cumulative effects, if any, of the proposed action and alternatives. The NEPA document preparation will be supported by a scoping process to ensure all pertinent issues are identified and analyzed.

1.2 Project Description

As described in the license, as amended,⁷ project works consist of: (1) Lake Pillsbury, having a normal surface area of 2,280 acres and a normal gross storage capacity of 86,785 acre-feet,⁸ impounded by; (2) Scott Dam, a concrete gravity, ogee-shaped structure, having a maximum height of 130 feet and a total length of 805 feet; (3) Van Arsdale reservoir, having a surface area of 106 acres and a maximum useable storage capacity of less than 600 acre-feet, impounded by (4) Cape Horn Dam, comprised of a 283-foot-long, concrete gravity structure having a maximum height of 63 feet and a 237-foot long earthfill embankment having a concrete core; (5) an intake structure, connected to an inclining horizontal fish screen facility and automatic trash rake, located on the south bank of Van Arsdale Reservoir 400 feet upstream of Cape Horn Dam, connecting to; (6) Tunnel No. 1, comprised of a 5,286-foot long, timber-lined trapezoidal section, 5-foot at top, 6-foot at bottom and 7.2-foot high; (7) a 457-foot-long day-lighted section of pipe and valve connecting Tunnel 1 to Tunnel 2, comprised of a 50-foot-long steel pipe section containing a 72-inch butterfly valve and sand trap, a 367-foot-long, 7-foot-diameter wood stave pipe, a 29-foot long steel pipe, varying in diameter from 7 feet to 7.25 feet, and a 10-foot long 7.25-foot-diameter steel pipe; (8) Tunnel No. 2, comprised of 78-foot long, concrete and steel-lined, circular section, 7.25 feet in diameter and a 729-foot long, concrete-lined, circular section, 7 to 7.25 feet in diameter;

⁷ See *Pacific Gas and Electric Company*, 71 FERC ¶ 62,082 (1995) and *Pacific Gas and Electric Company*, 82 FERC ¶ 62,154 (1998).

⁸ PG&E is no longer maintaining Lake Pillsbury at this normal reservoir elevation. On March 17, 2023, PG&E informed the Commission that due to seismic concerns it is modifying operations at Scott Dam. As an interim risk-reduction measure, PG&E established a 10-foot restriction on the maximum reservoir operating level and instead of closing the spillway gates to store additional water during spring and summer months, the spillway gates are open year-round to maintain water levels in Lake Pillsbury at or below the spillway crest elevation. This operation has reduced the storage capacity in Lake Pillsbury. In the surrender application, PG&E states that Lake Pillsbury’s gross storage capacity is approximately 53,248 acre-feet, with a usable capacity of 43,248 acre-feet. On May 22, 2023, PG&E filed an amendment application to effectively manage water storage, remain in compliance with license requirements, and incorporate this interim risk-reduction measure into the license. The amendment application is currently pending under P-77-318.

(9) an 8.1-foot-long, steel pipe section, tapering from 7.25 to 7 feet in diameter and connecting to a 359-foot-long, 7-foot-diameter, wood stave pipe bifurcating into two 62-inch diameter pipes that connect to two 60-inch diameter gate valves; (10) Penstock No. 1, a 1,793-foot-long, riveted steel pipe, varying in diameter from 62 inches at the gate valve to 48 inches at the powerhouse; (11) Penstock No. 2, a 1,812-foot-long, riveted steel pipe, varying in diameter from 62 inches at the gate valve to 48 inches at the powerhouse; (12) a 30-inch diameter wye branch, supplying water from each penstock to the powerhouse Unit No. 3; (13) an indoor-type powerhouse, containing a 6,500-horsepower, single-runner, horizontal-reaction turbine, directly connected to a 4,400 kilowatt (kW) generator and two 4,000-horsepower, single-runner, horizontal-reaction turbines, directly connected to a 2,559 kW and 3,060 kW generator, respectively; (14) an outdoor 60 kilovolt (kV) switchyard, adjacent to the powerhouse; and (15) 3 concrete tailrace channels joining together 50 feet downstream of the powerhouse, connecting to a 6,420-foot tailrace canal, and discharging into the East Fork Russian River.

2.0 SCOPING

This Scoping Document 1 (SD1) is intended to advise all participants as to the proposed scope of the Commission's NEPA document and to seek additional information pertinent to this analysis. This document contains: (1) a description of the scoping process; (2) a description of PG&E's proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action; (3) a preliminary identification of environmental issues; and (4) a request for comments and information.

2.1 Purposes of Scoping

Scoping is the process used to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities for enhancement or mitigation associated with a proposed action. In general, scoping should be conducted during the early planning stages of a project. The purposes of the scoping process are as follows:

- invite participation of federal, state and local resource agencies, Native-American Tribes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the public to identify significant environmental and socioeconomic issues related to the proposed surrender;
- determine the resource issues, depth of analysis, and significance of issues to be addressed in the NEPA document;
- identify reasonable alternatives to the proposed action that should be evaluated in the NEPA document;
- identify how the proposed surrender would or would not contribute to reasonable foreseeable cumulative effects in the project area;
- solicit, from participants, available information on the resources at issue; and

- determine the resource areas and potential issues that do not require detailed analysis during review of the project.

2.2 Comments and Scoping Meetings

During preparation of the NEPA document, there will be several opportunities for the resource agencies, Tribes, NGOs, and the public to provide input. In addition to our public notice of the application soliciting comments, motions to intervene and protests issued on October 31, 2025, upcoming opportunities include the following:

- during the public scoping process when we solicit comments regarding the scope of the issues and analysis for the NEPA document; and
- after issuance of the NEPA document when we solicit written comments on the document.

In addition to written comments solicited by this SD1, we will hold two scoping meetings to receive comments on scoping. We invite all interested agencies, Tribes, NGOs, and individuals to attend one or both of these meetings to assist us in identifying the scope of environmental issues that should be analyzed in the NEPA document. Comments filed in response to the Commission's October 31, 2025, do not need to be submitted again as part of scoping. The times and locations of these scoping meetings are as follows:

Evening Scoping Meeting
Date: Tuesday, June 23, 2026
Time: 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Pacific Time (PT)
Location: Ukiah Valley Conference Center (Chenin Blanc Room), 200 S School Street, Ukiah, CA 95482
Daytime Scoping Meeting
Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2026
Time: 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Pacific Time (PT)
Location: Ukiah Valley Conference Center (Chenin Blanc Room), 200 S School Street, Ukiah, CA 95482

At the start of each scoping meeting, Commission staff will provide a brief overview of the meeting format and objectives. Individual oral comments will be taken on a one-on-one basis with a court reporter (with Commission staff present). This format is designed to receive the maximum number of oral comments in a convenient way during the timeframe allotted. If you wish to speak, Commission staff will hand out

numbers in the order of your arrival. Please see Appendix A for additional information on the session format and conduct.

Scoping comments will be recorded by the court reporter and become part of the public record for this proceeding. Transcripts will be publicly available on FERC's eLibrary system. If a significant number of people are interested in providing comments in the one-on-one settings, a time limit of 3-5 minutes may be implemented for each commentor.

It is important to note that the Commission provides equal consideration to all comments received, whether filed in writing or provided orally at a scoping session. Although there will not be a formal presentation, Commission staff will be available throughout the scoping session to answer your questions about the environmental review process. Representatives from PG&E will also be present.

Interested parties who choose not to speak or who are unable to attend the scoping meetings may provide written comments and information to the Commission as described in section 5.0, Request for Information. These meetings, along with other related information are posted on the Commission's calendar located at <https://www.ferc.gov/news-events/events>. Select "Scoping Meeting" from the dropdown menu near the center of the page.

It is advised that participants review the proposed surrender and non-project use application, filed on July 25, 2025, to prepare for the scoping meetings. These applications may be viewed on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov), using the "eLibrary" link on the right side of the page. Enter the docket number, P-77, to access the document. For assistance, contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at (866) 208-3676, or for TYY, (202) 502-8659.

Following the scoping meetings and comment period, all issues raised will be reviewed and decisions made as to the level of analysis needed. If preliminary analysis indicates that any issues presented in this scoping document have little potential for causing significant effects, the issue(s) will be identified and the reasons for not providing a more detailed analysis will be given in the NEPA document.

If Commission staff do not receive any substantive comments on SD1, then we will not prepare a Scoping Document 2 (SD2). Otherwise, we will issue SD2 to address any substantive comments received. The SD2 will be issued for informational purposes only; no response will be required. The NEPA document will address recommendations and input received during the scoping process.

3.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with NEPA, the environmental analysis will consider the following alternatives, at a minimum: (1) the no-action alternative, (2) the applicant's proposed action; and (3) reasonable alternatives to the proposed action.

3.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the no-action alternative, the proposed action would not be authorized. The project would continue to operate as required by the current project license (i.e., there would be no change to the existing environment). No new environmental protection, mitigation, or enhancement measures would be implemented. We use this alternative to establish baseline environmental conditions for comparison with other alternatives.

At this time, we do not consider the no-action alternative to be a reasonable alternative because the applicant determined that the project is uneconomic to operate and would continue to be so with limited capacity, potential increased costs associated with any new license, as well as other challenging financial and operational circumstances. The no-action alternative would require PG&E to obtain a new license for the project; however, PG&E has requested to surrender its FPA license.

3.2 Applicant's Proposed Action

As part of surrender and decommissioning the project features, as shown in Figure 2 below (see also Volume 1A, Section 1.0 and 5.0 of the surrender application), PG&E proposes to:

- Decommission and remove Scott Dam and associated facilities and features;
- Remove certain project recreational facilities (e.g., campgrounds, day-use facilities, kiosk, and boat ramps) and restore associated lands (see Volume II, Section 2.1.2.1, Tables 2.8 and 2.10);
- Decommission and remove Cape Horn Dam and associated facilities and features except those necessary for the New Eel-Russian Facility (NERF) to be operated by the Eel-Russian Project Authority (ERPA);
- Once constructed, remove the NERF facility and associated lands from the existing license; and
- Restore the remnant inundation zone of Lake Pillsbury and Van Arsdale Reservoir, including adjacent riparian, wetlands, and upland areas affected by the decommissioning.

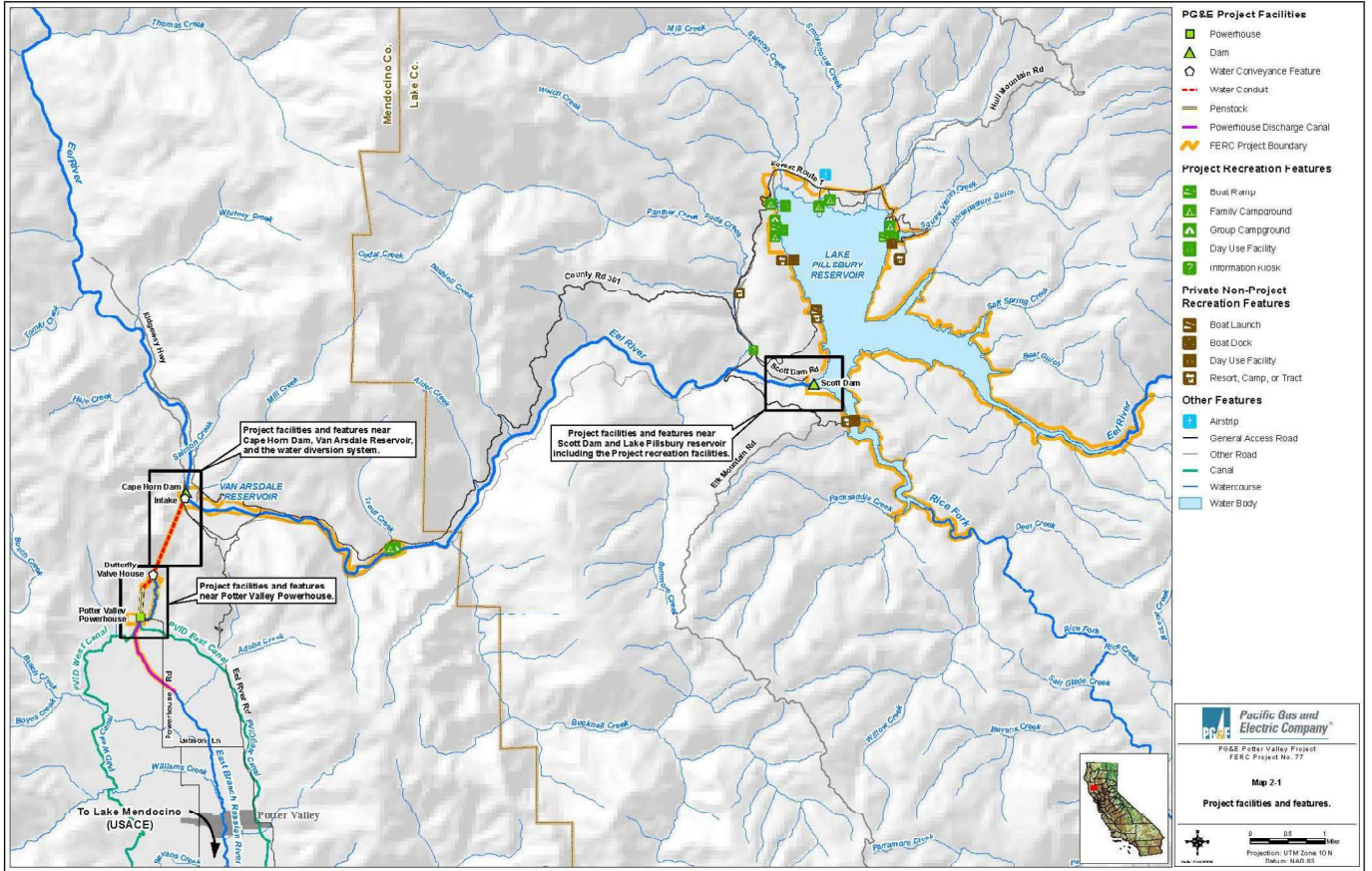


Figure 2. Project facilities and features (Source: PG&E's Application for surrender of license, filed on July 25, 2025).

PG&E requests that the Commission include a condition in any surrender order to remove all lands and project works necessary for the NERF from the project boundary and jurisdiction immediately after completion of the following activities: (1) PG&E has completed decommissioning work at Cape Horn Dam and other works necessary for the NERF; (2) the NERF has been constructed; and (3) PG&E has filed a decommissioning report with the Commission on these actions. The construction of the NERF by the ERPA would occur while the existing license remains in effect. The purpose of the NERF is to accommodate future water diversion from the Eel River through the project's existing water diversion system to the Russian River watershed.

Under the proposed non-project use of project lands (see Volume 1B, Section 5.0), PG&E would allow the ERPA to construct the NERF (see Figure 3 below) and take the following actions:

- Phase 1: Initial mobilization and site preparation;
- Phase 2: Construct in-water components of the NERF while the cofferdams are in place in the Eel River, construct a second bypass inside the Potter Valley Powerhouse that would be used to increase the diversion rate up to 300 cubic feet per second (cfs) and install an energy dissipation valve and associated instrumentation outside the powerhouse; and
- Phase 3: Construct the remaining NERF components near Cape Horn Dam and install necessary mechanical and electrical equipment.

PG&E indicates that the future operation and maintenance of the NERF facility by ERPA would require separate environmental analysis and permits/approvals to be completed by the ERPA.

Proposed environmental protection, mitigation and enhancement measures are described in Volume II, section 2.1.2.2 of the application, and include the development of certain management plans, in consultation with resource agencies, Tribes, and other interested parties. PG&E proposes to file these management plans with the Commission within 24 months of filing the surrender application, i.e., by July 2027. Plans and mitigation measures to be developed for surrender of the project include the following (see Volume II, section 2.1.2.2, Table 2-12): (1) construction management plan; (2) construction site water diversion, dewatering, and drawdown plan; (3) East Branch Russian River diversion plan; (4) public safety plan; (5) water quality and water temperature monitoring plan; (6) aquatic resources management plan; (7) sediment/channel monitoring and response plan; (8) flood monitoring plan; (9) terrestrial wildlife management plan; (10) bald eagle conservation plan; (11) northern spotted owl measures; (12) Scott Dam slope stability monitoring plan; and (13) cultural and Tribal resource measures (to include a memorandum of agreement/historic properties management plan). Overall restoration goals for each project development is described

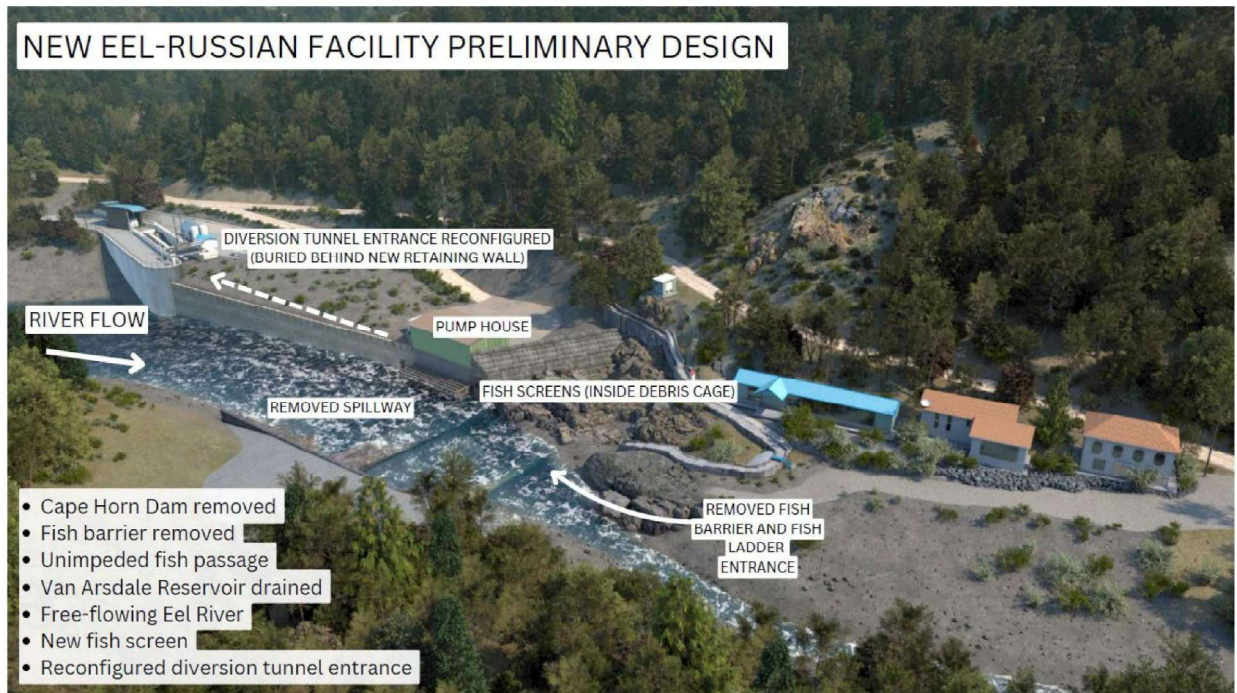


Figure 3-3. NERF preliminary design upstream of deconstructed Cape Horn Dam (artist rendering).

Figure 3. NERF preliminary design (Source: PG&E's application for non-project use of public lands, filed July 25, 2025).

in Table 5.2 (see Volume II, Section 2.1.2.1.1, Table 2-11). Various components of each plan are described in the application.

Plans and mitigation measures proposed to be developed to address and reduce potential effects to environmental and cultural resources during NERF construction (by ERPA) include the following (see Volume II, section 3.1, Table 3-2): (1) construction management plan; (2) bald eagle conservation plan; (3) aquatic resources management plan; (4) construction water quality monitoring plan; (5) construction East Branch Russian River diversion plan; (6) construction site dewatering plan; and (7) cultural and Tribal resource measures.

In general, PG&E proposes to implement best management practices (BMPs), general construction measures, avoidance and protection measures, construction monitoring, and public outreach notification during decommissioning activities (described in Volume II, Section 2.1.2.1.1).

3.3 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Commission staff will consider and assess all alternative recommendations for operational or facility modifications, as well as protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures identified by the Commission, the agencies, Native American Tribes, NGOs, and the public.

3.4 Alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study

At present, Commission staff propose to eliminate the following alternatives from detailed study in the NEPA document for the reasons discussed below. In addition, consistent with our Decommissioning Policy,⁹ Commission staff do not consider installation of new facilities, e.g., fish passage facilities, appropriate at the time of project surrender.

3.4.1 Phased Removal of Scott Dam

PG&E considered phased removal of Scott Dam as an alternative in its application. Phased removal would entail successive lowering and notching of Scott Dam such that sediment would be flushed from the reservoir downstream into the Eel River during three different high flow pulses, over consecutive years. Drawdown would be initiated in June-October with a drawdown rate of 1-2 foot/per after the runoff season when inflows are approximately below 400 cfs. PG&E would construct a notch (i.e., a

⁹ *Project Decommissioning at Relicensing*, Policy Statement, FERC Stats. & Regs. ¶ 31,011, at 31,232 (1994) (cross-referenced at 69 FERC ¶ 61,336) (Decommissioning Policy Statement).

50-foot-wide notch) in the dam sufficient to convey anticipated high winter and spring flows. During the first high-flow season (November-May), PG&E would flush approximately 1.1 million cubic yards of sediment. In subsequent low-flow seasons (June-October, for two years), PG&E would continue to lower and notch the dam to a final elevation of 1,810 feet. In the corresponding high-flow seasons (November-May), PG&E would continue to flush sediment (8.5 million cubic yards in the second year and 2.4 million cubic yards in the third year). The remaining dam structure would be removed following the sediment flushing activities.

PG&E eliminated phased removal of Scott Dam as an alternative, because this alternative would not eliminate the potential for unavoidable adverse effects (compared to the proposed action) and would not meet PG&E's interest to expeditiously remove the dams.

3.4.2 Retention of Scott Dam

Commission staff also considered retention of Scott Dam as a separate alternative. Given the seismic stability concerns surrounding the structure, past efforts to find an operator for the project, and PG&E's preferred alternative to remove the structure, staff dismissed this alternative as infeasible.

3.4.3 Surrender and Decommissioning (dam removal) without NERF

Commission staff also considered the surrender and decommissioning of the project without PG&E's non-project use of project lands proposal of ERPA's construction of the NERF. Removal of project facilities without construction of the NERF would eliminate the existing infrastructure necessary for any future diversions to the East Branch of the Russian River and would adversely affect PG&E's obligation to deliver up to 19,000 acre-feet of water to the Potter Valley Irrigation District (see Exhibit E, Volume II, section 3.2.15). Therefore, Commission staff eliminated this alternative.

3.4.4 Federal Government Takeover

In accordance with §16.14 of the Commission's regulations, a federal department or agency may file a recommendation that the United States exercise its right to take over a hydroelectric power project with a license that is subject to sections 14 and 15 of the FPA. We do not consider federal takeover to be a reasonable alternative. Federal takeover of the project would require congressional approval. While that fact alone would not preclude further consideration of this alternative, there is currently no evidence showing that federal takeover should be recommended to Congress. Further, no federal agency has expressed interest in operating the project.

3.4.5 Non-power License

A non-power license under 18 C.F.R. § 16.11 of the Commission's regulations is a temporary license that the Commission would terminate whenever it determines that another governmental agency is authorized and willing to assume regulatory authority and supervision over the lands and facilities covered by the non-power license. At this time, no governmental agency has expressed a willingness to do so. Thus, we do not consider a non-power license a reasonable alternative to surrendering and decommissioning the project.

4.0 SCOPE OF RESOURCE ISSUES

4.1 Cumulative Effects

A cumulative effect is the effect on the environment that results from the incremental effect of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time, including hydropower and other land and water development activities.

PG&E states the following actions could cumulatively effect environmental resources in the project area (see Volume II, Exhibit E, Section 2.2.5.4, and Section 3.2.15): (1) construction and operation of the NERF; (2) Sonoma Water's potential water reliability improvements in Potter Valley; (3) implementation of the fisheries restoration activities in the Eel River Restoration and Conservation Plan;¹⁰ (4) development and implementation of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) in both the Eel and Russian River watersheds; (5) implementation of recovery actions for federally protected California Coastal Chinook salmon and the Northern California steelhead DPS pursuant to the Coastal Multispecies Recovery Plan;¹¹ (6) Potter Valley Tribe's Eel River-Trout Creek and Alder Creek Land Acquisition; (7) continued management actions within the Mendocino National Forest, including implementation of the U.S. Forest Service's Mendocino National Forest land and resource management plan (LRMP); (8) potential reductions in snowpack and other weather-related shifts that could alter the timing, magnitude, and quality of flows in both watersheds; and (9) decommissioning of the Potter Valley Project.

¹⁰ See: https://caltrout.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Eel-River-RC-Plan_Final.pdf. Accessed on December 31, 2025.

¹¹ See: https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/2016-multispecies-recovery_plan-vol3.pdf. Accessed on December 31, 2025.

Environmental resources that may be cumulatively affected by the proposed action and other reasonably foreseeable events in the watershed include water use and hydrology, water quality, fish and aquatic resources, botanical resources, wildlife resources, geology and soils, geomorphology, land use, recreation resources, cultural resources, Tribal resources, socioeconomics, noise, and marine resources.

4.2 Resource Issues

In this section, we present a preliminary list of environmental issues to be addressed in the NEPA document. We identified these issues, listed by resource area, by reviewing the surrender application, including the non-project use of project lands, and the Commission's record for the Potter Valley Project. This list is not intended to be exhaustive or final but contains those issues raised to date that could have substantial effects. After the scoping process is complete, we will review the list and determine the appropriate level of analysis needed to address each issue.

4.2.1. Geology and Soils

- Soil disturbance and erosion during construction activities (dam removal and NERF construction);
- Soil contamination from accidental spill of oil, fuel, or other toxic materials during construction;
- Release of naturally occurring asbestos during construction, if present in serpentine rock and disturbed into the air;
- Activation of known landslide area near Scott Dam;
- Slope instability around Lake Pillsbury with drawdown and removal of Scott Dam, which could lead to slope failure and increased sedimentation;
- Release of sediments accumulated behind Scott and Cape Horn dams to the Eel River; and
- Increased likelihood of soil erosion from exposure of previously inundated slopes with dewatering of Lake Pillsbury.

4.2.2. Water Use and Hydrology

- Alteration of hydrology in the Eel River because of Lake Pillsbury drawdown and construction activities (dam removal and NERF construction);
- Alteration of hydrology in the Eel River because of Van Arsdale Reservoir drawdown and installation of dewatering and bypass systems at Cape Horn Dam site;
- Alteration of hydrology in the East Branch Russian River during construction;
- Effects on Eel River hydrology post-removal of dams;
- Effects on downstream Eel River water users;

- Effects of altered hydrology on the East Branch Russian River post-removal of dams, i.e., water supply and flow;
- Effects of drawdown and removal of Lake Pillsbury on groundwater, i.e., local groundwater wells; and
- Effects on flood control.

4.2.3. Water Quality

- Effects on water quality (e.g., turbidity, suspended solids, water temperature, pH, and Dissolved Oxygen) of Eel and East Branch Russian rivers during drawdown, construction activities (dam removal and NERF construction) related to dam removal, as well as post-removal;
- Contamination from pollutant spill during construction;
- Contamination from stormwater runoff during construction;
- Contamination from temporary human waste facilities used during construction;
- Effects on water temperature from removal of cold-water pool (i.e., Lake Pillsbury);
- Effects of fine sediments post-removal;
- Effects of potential release of toxic sediments (e.g., those containing heavy metals and/or other contaminants);
- Effects of increased use of herbicides to prohibit invasive plant spread during construction and restoration activities; and
- Effects on beneficial uses of Lake Pillsbury (e.g., groundwater recharge, freshwater replenishment, navigation, etc.).

4.2.4 Aquatic Resources

- Construction- and decommissioning-related effects resulting in direct loss or disturbance of fish and aquatic species in both watersheds;
- Effects of release of non-native aquatic species from Lake Pillsbury and Van Arsdale Reservoir during construction and after removal;
- Permanent occupation of 0.86 acres of aquatic habitat for improved pump facilities;
- Effects of increased flows in the Eel River watershed and decreased flows in the East Branch Russian River watershed post-removal;
- Post-removal effects of water quality on fish and aquatic species; and
- Changes in habitat availability and volitional passage post-removal.

4.2.5 Marine Resources

- Effects of increased turbidity and suspended sediments during construction, decommissioning, and restoration;
- Effects of general degradation of water quality during construction, decommissioning, and restoration activities;

- Effects of sediment load in the Eel River estuary and nearshore areas after Scott Dam is removed;
- Effects to eelgrass beds in the Eel River estuary;
- Effects to Pacific Coast Salmon essential fish habitat (EFH), Pacific groundfish EFH, coastal pelagic species EFH, and highly migratory species EFH;
- Effects to marine mammals and sea turtles;
- Effects of potential pollutant spills of oil, fuel, or other toxic materials;
- Effects of water contamination from stormwater, nutrient, and bacterial runoff;
- Effects of changes in hydrology in the Eel River; potential blocking of Eel river mouth in Eel River estuary; and
- Effects of changes in unimpaired sediment processes post-construction and restoration.

4.2.6 Botanical Resources

- Direct loss of special-status plants during construction of NERF facility and dam removal, as well as post-removal;
- Indirect effects on vegetation through loss or degradation of habitat, including the introduction or spread of invasive plants during all construction and post-removal restoration activities.
- Reduction in amount of riparian habitat during construction and post-removal restoration both in project area and downstream in the Eel River due to sediment releases associated with dam removal and NERF construction;
- Indirect effects to riparian and wetland habitat along shoreline of Lake Pillsbury and Van Arsdale Reservoir during drawdown;
- Indirect effects to riparian and wetland habitat downstream of the dam sites from increased erosion and potential hazardous material spills during construction, as well as along the Eel River downstream of the project area;
- Beneficial effects to special-status plants, and riparian and wetland habitats from restoration of reservoir footprints and recreation sites; and
- Change in habitat potentially supporting special-status plants in East Branch Russian River following proposed flow conditions.

4.2.7 Wildlife Resources

- Direct effects to breeding or foraging individuals during construction and restoration;
- Direct effects on active nests or disturbance of foraging individuals during construction (dam removal and NERF construction) and restoration activities, including the potential loss of nesting habitat and on aquatic-foraging birds and raptors;

- Indirect effects through a reduction or degradation of habitat resulting from removal of vegetation and/or the introduction of invasive plants during construction;
- Effects of loss of lacustrine habitat to riverine habitat within the former reservoir footprints;
- Effects on wildlife resulting from the potential sediment deposition on downstream riparian/wetland habitat;
- Effects from increase in habitat/vegetation from restoration of the former reservoir footprints;
- Effects on potential wildlife habitat in the East Branch Russian River following changes in flows; and
- Potential for vehicle collision of wildlife individuals during construction and restoration activities.

4.2.8 Threatened and Endangered Species

- Effects of project surrender, construction activities (dam removal and NERF construction), and restoration, on all species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), or proposed for listing under the ESA.

4.2.9 Recreation

- Reduction in recreation opportunities and experience during construction (dam removal and construction of NERF);
- Effects of loss of lake-based recreation and change to riverine recreation opportunities in the Eel River project area;
- Effects of potential increase in uncontrolled off-road vehicle use in the Lake Pillsbury area;
- Permanent closure of certain recreation facilities;
- Effects on recreation use and opportunities along the Rice Fork and Eel River;
- Effects on wildlife viewing, fishing, and hunting on the Eel River and in the Eel River Estuary due to sediment release post-dam removal;
- Effects of changes in groundwater levels on recreation facilities' water supply; and
- Effects on recreation use and opportunities in the East Branch Russian River.

4.2.10 Land Use

- Effects of change in land use from the development of construction and staging areas, as well as the removal of recreation facilities and other ancillary facilities;
- Effects of changes in land use resulting from the construction of the NERF;
- Potential fire risk during construction;
- Effects of reservoir loss as a source of water for wildfire suppression;

- Effects of non-hazardous waste disposal during construction activities (dam removals and NERF construction);
- Construction-related effects on public safety, local traffic, road conditions, and emergency response times;
- Effects of accumulated sediment on flood risk;
- Effects on bridges and road crossings due to flooding;
- Effects of project boundary loss on potential changes to land use; and
- Effects on the Eel River Wild and Scenic River designation (e.g., from dam removal activities and NERF construction).

4.2.11 Aesthetic Resources

- Construction-related effects due to the presence of construction work and staging areas in the project area, including the dewatered reservoirs;
- Construction-related effects on the Eel River Wild and Scenic River designation (e.g., from dam removal activities and NERF construction);
- Effects on scenic corridors during construction and post-removal;
- Effects of reservoir loss and change to riverine setting;
- Effects of initial release of stored water and sediment following removal of the adit (tunnel) plug at Scott Dam and the complete removal of both dams (including pulse flows during drawdown and sediment deposition downstream);
- Effects of sediment load/deposition and turbidity in the Eel River on aesthetics during and after construction;
- Effects of heavy equipment use and ground disturbance during transport of materials to and from the project area;
- Effects from changes in hydrology to Eel River and East Branch Russian River;
- Effects of restored sediment transport and water quality in the Eel River downstream of the project; and
- Effects on aesthetic resources related to changing recreation opportunities in the Lake Pillsbury area.

4.2.12 Socioeconomics

- Effects on water reliability and cost;
- Effects on energy reliability and cost;
- Effects on economic opportunity (e.g., income and employment);
- Effects on population and housing;
- Effects on recreation value;
- Effects on community way of life;
- Effects on local government stability and fiscal conditions;
- Effects on habitat and species-related cultural and economic values;

- Effects of dam removal on residents' property values around Lake Pillsbury; and
- Effects of any reduction in the amount of water available for irrigation on agricultural production.

4.2.13 Cultural and Historic Resources

- Effects of project removal (i.e., draining of reservoirs, removal of project structures);
- Effects of construction activities (dam removal and construction of NERF);
- Changes in use of the property and/or physical features that contribute to historic significance of project;
- Effects of sediment deposition and turbidity on resources downstream in the Eel River;
- Post-removal effects related to unimpaired hydrology and restored sediment transport in Eel River; and
- Post-removal effects related to hydrology changes in the East Branch Russian River.

4.2.14 Tribal Resources

- Effects, both direct and indirect, of construction on Tribal resources including disturbance of human remains;
- Effects, both direct and indirect, of restoration activities on Tribal resources including disturbance of human remains;
- Effects on Tribal resources resulting from changes in character, use, or physical and sensory setting that may diminish religious and/or cultural significance of a resources;
- Effects of exposure and erosion of currently submerged Tribal resources within the reservoirs;
- Effects of disruption in access and use of ethnobiological resources, ceremonial areas, and other Tribal activities from construction activities (dam removal and NERF construction);
- Effects of the loss of facilities or features (e.g., loss of reservoir, ancillary facility, or recreation facility);
- Effects of release of water and sediment releases on Tribal resources downstream of project area;
- Effects to traditional food sources in the Eel River and Eel River Estuary following sediment release post-dam removal;
- Effects of changed hydrology, and restored sediment transport downstream, in the Eel River;
- Effects of changed hydrology in the East Branch Russian River; and
- Effects of restoration of riverbeds and ancillary/recreation following removal.

4.2.15 Air Quality and Noise

- Effects of construction-related equipment (including but not limited to helicopters, tractors, excavators, and cranes) and activities during project removal and construction of NERF, including detonation of the adit (tunnel) plug and general vehicle use;
- Effects of construction-related equipment and activities during restoration activities; and
- Effects of noise and vibration from construction equipment, hauling activities, and movement of materials in project area during removal, construction of NERF, and restoration activities.

4.2.16 Traffic

- Effects of increased construction traffic on local roads during construction and restoration;
- Effects of increased traffic from worker transportation during construction and restoration;
- Effects of any anticipated road closures;
- Effects on emergency vehicles and access; and
- Effects of overall transportation network post removal, including sedimentation effects on roads further away from project.

5.0 REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

We are asking federal, state, and local resource agencies, Tribes, NGOs, and the public to forward to the Commission any information that will assist us in conducting an accurate and thorough analysis of the effects associated with the surrender and decommissioning of the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project, as well as the construction of the NERF, as part of PG&E's application for non-project use of project lands. The types of information requested include, but are not limited to:

- information, quantitative data, or professional opinions that may help define the scope of the analysis, and that helps identify significant environmental issues;
- identification of, and information from any other environmental assessment, EIS, or similar environmental study (previous, ongoing, or planned) relevant to the proposed surrender and decommissioning of the project, and the proposed non-project use of project lands to construct the NERF;
- existing information and any data that would help to describe the past and present actions and effects of the project and other developmental activities on environmental and socioeconomic resources;
- information that would help characterize existing environmental conditions and habitats;

- identification of any federal, state, or local resource plans, and any future project proposals in the affected resource area (e.g., proposals to construct or operate water treatment facilities, water diversions, timber harvests, or fish management programs), along with any implementation schedules;
- documentation that the proposed action would or would not contribute to cumulative adverse or beneficial effects on any resources. Documentation can include, but need not be limited to, how the project would interact with other projects in the area and other developmental activities; study results; resource management policies; and reports from federal, state, and local agencies, Tribes, NGOs, and the public; and
- documentation showing why any resources should be excluded from further study or consideration.

The requested information and comments on SD1 may be filed electronically via the Internet no later than **5:00 pm Eastern Time, July 24, 2026**. All filings must clearly identify the following on the first page: **Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project (P-77-332)**. Scoping comments may be filed electronically via the Internet. See 18 C.F.R. 385.2001(a)(1)(iii) and the instructions on the Commission's website <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/FERCOnline.aspx>. Commenters can submit brief comments up to 10,000 characters, without prior registration, using the eComment system at <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/QuickComment.aspx>. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at (866) 208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659. In lieu of electronic filing, you may submit a paper copy. Submissions sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. Submissions sent via any other carrier must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

Register online at <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/FERCOnline.aspx> to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to these or other pending projects. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov.

Intervenors—those on the Commission's service list for this proceeding—are reminded that if they file comments with the Commission, they must also serve a copy of their filing on each person whose name appears on the official service list. Note that the list is periodically updated. The official service list can be obtained on the Commission's website (<https://www.ferc.gov>)—click on Documents and Filing and click on eService—or call the Office of the Secretary, Dockets Branch at (202) 502-8715. In addition, if any party files comments or documents with the Commission relating to the merits of an issue that may affect the responsibilities of a particular resource agency, they must also serve a copy of the document on the resource agency.

Any questions concerning how to file written comments with the Commission should be directed to Diana Shannon at (202) 502-6136 or via email at diana.shannon@ferc.gov. Additional information about the Commission’s surrender process and the project may be obtained from the Commission’s website, www.ferc.gov.

6.0 CURRENT PROCESSING SCHEDULE

The decision on whether to prepare an EA or an EIS will be made after scoping and review of the comments, as we determined the scope of effects and measures under consideration. Notice of the NEPA document will be distributed to all persons and entities on the Commission’s service and mailing lists for the project. The NEPA document will include staff recommendations for any environmental protection and enhancement measures that should be part of any surrender and decommissioning of the project. The comment period will be specified in the notice of availability of the NEPA document.

The major milestones, including PG&E’s proposed schedule for filing of the management plans and mitigation measures, are as follows:

Major Milestone	Target Date
Application Filed	July 25, 2025
Public Notice of Application	October 31, 2025
Comment Period Ends	December 19, 2025
Scoping Document 1/Notice Issued	May 22, 2026
Scoping Meetings	June 23-24, 2026
Scoping Document 1 Comments Due	July 24, 2026
Scoping Document 2 (if necessary)	September 15, 2026
PG&E’s filing of plans/measures	July 25, 2027

If Commission staff determines that there is a need for additional information or additional scoping, the schedule may be modified. If this occurs, all subsequent milestones would be delayed by the time allowed for the licensee to respond to the Commission’s request.

Commission staff’s development of a NEPA document is dependent upon the timely filing of PG&E’s proposed mitigation plans, as described in Volume II, section 2.1.2.2, and Volume II, section 3.1, Table 3-2. These plans are expected to supplement the surrender application and be filed no later than July 25, 2027.

7.0 MAILING LIST

The list below is the Commission’s official mailing list for the Potter Valley Project. If you want to receive future mailings for the project from the Commission and are not included on the list below, please send your request by email to FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov. In lieu of an email request, you may submit a paper request. Submissions sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. Submissions sent via any other carrier must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20852. All written and emailed requests to be added to the mailing list must clearly identify the following on the first page: **Potter Valley Project (P-77-332)**. You may use the same method if requesting removal from the mailing list below.

Register online at <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/FERCOnline.aspx> to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to this or other pending projects. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659.

Official Mailing List for the Potter Valley Project

Joshua Horowitz Amador Water Agency Bartkiewicz, Kronick & Shanahan 1011 22 nd Street Sacramento, CA 95816	Larry B. McKenney General Manager Amador Water Agency 12800 Ridge Road Sutter Creek, CA 95685	Meghan Quinn Director, CA Dam Removal American Rivers 120 Union Street Nevada City, CA 95959
Kevin Richard Colburn National Stewardship Director American Whitewater P.O. Box 1540 Cullowhee, NC 28723	Scott Harding Stewardship Associate American Whitewater P.O. Box 63 Springfield, OR 97477	Eric Woodruff California Sportfishing Protection Alliance 905 Delmar Drive Santa Rosa, CA 95405
Chris Shutes Executive Director California Sportfishing Protection Alliance 1608 Francisco Street Berkeley, CA 94703	Brian Johnson, California Director, Trout Unlimited California Sportfishing Protection Alliance 5950 Doyle Street, Suite 2 Emeryville, CA 94608	Annie Rosen California Coastal Commission Energy, Ocean Resources, and Federal Consistency Office 455 Market Street, Suite 300 San Francisco, CA 94105
Gary Stacey, Regional Manager California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Northern Region 601 Locust Street Redding, CA 96001	Mark Stopher Habitat Cons. Program Manager California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Northern Region 601 Locust Street Redding, CA 96001	Donna Cobb Senior Environmental Scientist California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Northern Region 601 Locust Street Redding, CA 96001
Davis Ferguson California Department of Fish and Wildlife 601 Locust Street Redding, CA 96001	Matt Myers FERC Coordinator Region 1 California Department of Fish and Wildlife 601 Locust Street Redding, CA 96001	Allan Renger California Department of Fish and Wildlife 1487 Sandy Prairie Court, Suite A Fortuna, CA 95540

Dana Heinrich Senior Staff Counsel California Department of Water Resources 1001 I Street Sacramento, CA 94816	Camilla Williams California Department of Water Resources P.O. Box 2000 Sacramento, CA 95812	Richard Roos-Collins California Hydropower Reform Coalition Natural Heritage Institute 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 801 Berkeley, CA 94704-1229
Julie Gantenbein, Staff Attorney California Hydropower Reform Coalition 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 801 Berkeley, CA 94704	Governor of California 1021 O Street, Suite 9000 Sacramento, CA 95814	California Public Utilities Commission, Consumers Affairs Branch 505 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94102-3214
Arocles Aguilar, ESQ California Public Utilities Commission 505 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94102	Peter Allen California Public Utilities Commission 505 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94102	Traci Bone California Public Utilities Commission 505 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94102
Stephan Volker Law Offices of Stephan C. Volk 1633 University Avenue Berkeley, CA 94703	Eric Woodruff California Sportfishing Protection Alliance 905 Delmar Drive Santa Rosa, CA 95405	Walter Collins California Trout 435 Pacific Avenue, Suite 200 San Francisco, CA 94133
Kevin Bundy, Attorney California Trout, Inc. Shute, Mihaley and Winberger, LLP 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102	Matthew McKerley, Attorney California Trout, Inc. Shute, Mihaley and Winberger, LLP 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102	Eric Danly City of Petaluma City Attorney's Office 11 English Street Petaluma, CA 94952
Davin Widgerow City of Rohnert Park Burke, Williams and Sorensen LLP 501 W Broadway, Suite 1600 San Diego, CA 92101	Michelle Kenyon City of Rohnert Park Burke, Williams and Sorensen LLP 1999 Harrison Street, Suite 1650 Oakland, CA 94612	Mark Henderson Interim Public Works Director City of Rohnert Park 600 Enterprise Drive Rohnert Park, CA 94928
Michael Barrett City of Rohnert Park Burke, Williams and Sorensen LLP 181 3 rd Street, Suite 200 San Rafael, CA 94901	Dustin Cooper, Attorney City of Santa Rosa Minasian Law Firm Minasian, Meith, Soares, Sexton P.O. Box 1679 Oroville, CA 95965	Jennifer Burke City of Santa Rosa 69 Stony Circle Santa Rosa, CA 95401
Peter Martin, Jr. City of Santa Rosa 69 Stony Point Road Santa Rosa, CA 95401	David Rapport City of Ukiah Rapport and Marston 405 West Perkins Street Ukiah, CA 95482	Philip Williams City of Ukiah Law Offices of Philip Williams 210 South State Street Ukiah, CA 95482
Alex Mog, City Attorney City of Cloverdale Redwood Public Law 300 Frank H Ogawa Plaza, Ste. 430 Oakland, CA 94612	Kevin Thompson, City Manager City of Cloverdale 124 N Cloverdale Blvd. Cloverdale, CA 95425	Commissioner California Public Utilities Commission Consumer Affairs Branch 505 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94102-3214
Hank Seemann, Deputy Director County of Humboldt 1106 2 nd Street Eureka, CA 95501	Destinee Valeska Deputy County Counsel County of Humboldt 825 5 th Street Eureka, CA 95501	Joel Campbell-Blair Deputy County Counsel County of Humboldt 825 5 th Street, Room 110 Eureka, CA 95501

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Cameron Reeves County of Lake 255 N Forbes Street Lakeport, CA 95453-4759	Lloyd Guintivano County of Lake 255 N Forbes Street Lakeport, CA 95453	Michael Swiger, Partner County of Sonoma 2000 Pennsylvania Ave, NW Suite 6000 Washington, DC 20006
Stephen Shupe County of Sonoma 575 Administration Dr., Rm 105A Santa Rosa, CA 95403	Richard Roos-Collins County of Sonoma Natural Heritage Institute 2140 Shattuck Ave., Suite 801 Berkeley, CA 94704-1229	Kerry O'Hara, Attorney of Record Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor 2800 Cottage Way, Rm E-1712 Sacramento, CA 95825
Department of Interior Regional Environmental Officer Office/Enviro Policy and Com 2800 Cottage Way, Rm E-1712 Sacramento, CA 95825	Department of Interior Arcata FWS FERC Coordinator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1655 Heindon Road Arcata, CA 95521	Viktoriya Sirova, Regional Environmental Officer Dept of Interior, Office of the Solicitor 1323 Club Drive Vallejo, CA 94592
Susan Rosebrough, Project Manager Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region 909 1 st Avenue Seattle, WA 98104	Harold Peterson Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region Division of Natural Resources 545 Marriott Drive, Suite 700 Nashville, TN 37214	Karen Glasgow, Supervisory Attorney Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region 2 Marina Blvd., Bldg E2nd FL San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park San Francisco, CA 94123
Charles Jachens Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region 2800 Cottage Way Sacramento, CA 95825	Malia Losordo Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region 1849 C Street, NW, MS 6511 Washington, DC 20240	Stacie Smith, Natural Resource Specialist Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region 2800 Cottage Way, Ste. W-1623 Sacramento, CA 95825
Zane Ruddy Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region 1695 Heindon Road Arcata, CA 95521	Arcata FWS FERC Coordinator Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region 1655 Heindon Road Arcata, CA 95521	Kathryn Brinton Dept. of Interior- Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region 2800 Cottage Way, Ste E1712 Sacramento, CA 95825
Richard Roos-Collins Eel-Russian Project Authority Natural Heritage Institute 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 801 Berkeley, CA 94704	Scott Shapiro, Attorney Eel-Russian Project Authority Downey Brand LLP 621 Capitol Mall FL 18 Sacramento, CA 95814	David Manning Environmental Resources Manager Eel-Russian Project Authority 404 Aviation Blvd. Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Monique Sanchez U.S. Forest Service 825 N Humboldt Avenue Willows, CA 95988	Michael Jackson Friends of the Eel River 178 Lee Way Quincy, CA 95971	Stephan Volker Law Offices of Stephan Volker 1633 University Avenue Berkeley, CA 94703
Ellison Folk, Attorney Friends of the Eel River Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102	Kevin Bundy, Attorney Friends of the Eel River Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102	Matthew McKerley Friends of the Eel River Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102
Alicia Hamann Friends of the Eel River 3407 I Street Eureka, CA 95503	Ronald Stork Friends of the River 1418 20 th Street, Suite 100 Sacramento, CA 95811	Gary Bobker, Program Director Friends of the River 1 Beach Street San Francisco, CA 94133

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Keiko Mertz, Policy Director Friends of the River 3336 Bradshaw Road, Suite 335 Sacramento, CA 95827	Jann Dorman, Executive Director Friends of the River 3336 Bradshaw Road, Suite 335 Sacramento, CA 95827	Frank Lynch Lake Pillsbury Homesite Assoc. 26831 Madrone Drive Cloverdale, CA 95425
Kevin Bundy, Attorney Institute for Fisheries Resources Shute, Mihaly, and Weinberger 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102	Anna Stimmel Institute for Fisheries Resources Earthjustice 50 California Street, Suite 500 San Francisco, CA 94111	Katrina Tomas Institute for Fisheries Resources Earthjustice 50 California Street, Suite 500 San Francisco, CA 94111
Glen Spain, NW Regional Director Institute for Fisheries Resources Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Assns. P.O. Box 11170 Eugene, OR 97440-3370	Sara Bates Institute for Fisheries Resources P.O. Box 1233 Oakland, CA 94604	Nancy Horton, Secretary Lake Pillsbury Alliance 1007-B West College Ave., #148 Santa Rosa, CA 95401
Paul Weiland, Partner Nossaman, LLP Lake Pillsbury Alliance 18101 Von Karman Ave., Ste 1800 Irvine, CA 92612	Ken Thomspson Lake Pillsbury Coordinated Resource Management and Planning 137 Vinecrest Circle Windsor, CA 95492	Cameron Reeves County of Lake 255 N Forbes Street Lakeport, CA 95453-4759
Norman Pedersen, Attorney Hanna and Morton LLP Los Angeles Dept. of Water & Power 444 South Flower St., Suite 1500 Los Angeles, CA 90071-2916	Mary Casey Marin Municipal Water District 220 Nellen Avenue Corte Madera, CA 94925-1102	Eric Robinson, Attorney Kronick Moskovitz Tiedemann & Girard Marin Municipal Water District 1331 Garden Hwy, 2 nd Floor Sacramento, CA 95833
Russell Frink, Esq Kronick Moskovitz Tiedemann & Girard Marin Municipal Water District 1331 Garden Hwy, 2 nd Floor Sacramento, CA 95833	Paul Sellier Director of Water Resources Marin Municipal Water District 220 Nellen Avenue Corte Madera, CA 94925	Terri Whitman Kronick Moskovitz Tiedemann & Girard Marin Municipal Water District 1331 Garden Hwy, 2 nd Floor Sacramento, CA 95833
Sherry Ramirez Kronick Moskovitz Tiedemann & Girard Marin Municipal Water District 1331 Garden Hwy, 2 nd Floor Sacramento, CA 95833	Ben Horenstein, General Manager Marin Municipal Water District 220 Nellen Avenue Corte Madera, CA 94925	Molly MacLean, Esq General Counsel Marin Municipal Water District 220 Nellen Avenue Corte Madera, CA 94925
Jerrad Mills, Esq Staff Attorney Marin Municipal Water District 220 Nellen Avenue Corte Madera, CA 94925	Adam Gaska, Executive Director Mendocino County Farm Bureau 455 E Gobbi Street Ukiah, CA 95482	Candace Horsley, Staff Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission P.O. Box 1247 Ukiah, CA 95482
Scott Shapiro, Attorney Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission 621 Capitol Mall FL 18 Sacramento, CA 95814	Janet K.F. Pauli, Director Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission 12507 Hawn Creek Road Potter Valley, CA 95469	Richard Roos-Collins Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission Natural Heritage Institute 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Ste. 801 Berkeley, CA 94704-1229

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Elizabeth Salomone Mendocino County Russian River Flood Control & Water Conservation Improvement District 151 Laws Avenue Ukiah, CA 95482	Clerk of the Board County of Mendocino 501 Low Gap Road Ukiah, CA 95482-3738	Steven Edmondson, Supervisor National Marine Fisheries Service- West Coast Region 777 Sonoma Avenue, Rm 325 Santa Rosa, CA 95404
Joshua Fuller, Fishery Biologist National Marine Fisheries Service- West Coast Region 777 Sonoma Avenue, Rm 325 Santa Rosa, CA 95404	Jake Crawford Native Fish Society 2305 Ashland St., Ste. C, PMB 150 Ashland, OR 97520	Mark Sherwood, Executive Director Native Fish Society 813 7 th Street, Suite 200A Oregon City, OR 97045
Andrew McClure, Attorney Minasian Law Firm Nevada Irrigation District 161 Bird Street Oroville, CA 95965	Dick Butler NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Habitat Conservation Branch 777 Sonoma Avenue, Ste. 325 Santa Rosa, CA 95404	Stephan Volker Law offices of Stephen Volk North Coast Rivers Alliance 1633 University Avenue Berkeley, CA 94703
Robert Maddow, Attorney North Marin Water District Bold, Polisner, Maddow, Nelson & Judson 2125 Oak Grove Road, Ste. 210 Walnut Creek, CA 94598	Drew McIntyre, General Manager North Marin Water District 999 Rush Creek Pl P.O. Box 146 Novato, CA 94948	Dustin Cooper, Attorney Minasian Law Firm North Marin Water District P.O. Box 1679 Oroville, CA 95965
Anthony Williams, General Manager North Marin Water District 999 Rush Creek Pl Novato, CA 94948	Craig Bell, Executive Director Northern California Assn. of River Guides P.O. Box 1256 Gualala, CA 95445-1256	Mark Rockwell VP of Conservation Northern California Council of Fly Fishing International 5033 Yaple Avenue Santa Barbara, CA 93111
Sarah Bates Pacific Coast Federal of Fishermen's Associations Institute for Fisheries Resources P.O. Box 1233 Oakland, CA 94604	Glenn Spain, Esq. NW Regional Director Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations P.O. Box 11170 Eugene, OR 97440-3370	Stephan Volker Law offices of Stephen Volk Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations 1633 University Avenue Berkeley, CA 94703
Anna Stimmel Earthjustice Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations 50 California Street, Suite 500 San Francisco, CA 94111	Katrina Tomas Earthjustice Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations 50 California Street, Suite 500 San Francisco, CA 94111	Kevin Bundy, Attorney Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102
Neil Wong, Compliance Analyst Pacific Gas and Electric Company P.O. Box 770000 Oakland, CA 94177-0001	Chadwick McCready Senior License Coordinator Pacific Gas and Electric Company 470 Rio Lindo Avenue Chico, CA 95926	Pacific Gas and Electric Company Regulatory File Room 300 Lakeside Drive Oakland, CA 94612-3534
Jan Nimick, Vice President Pacific Gas and Electric Company 245 Market Street San Francisco, CA 94105	Janet Walther Director, Licensing and Compliance Pacific Gas and Electric Company 12840 Bill Clark Way Auburn, CA 95602	Stephanie Maggard Director, Portfolio Strategy a Pacific Gas and Electric Company 300 Lakeside Drive Oakland, CA 94612

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Russell Cruzen, P.E., Director, Power Generation Asset Exc. Pacific Gas and Electric Company 300 Lakeside Drive Oakland, CA 94612	David Taber, President Palomino Lakes Mutual Water Company P.O. Box 687 Cloverdale, CA 95425	Donald Brown Potter Valley Irrigation District P.O. Box 186 10170 Main Street Potter Valley, CA 95469
Janet K.F. Pauli, Director Potter Valley Irrigation District 12507 Hawn Creek Road Potter Valley, CA 95469	David Arthur Redding Electric Utility P.O. Box 496071 Redding, CA 96049-6071	Sattie Clark Redwood Valley Municipal Advisory Council of Mendocino County P.O. Box 243 Redwood Valley, CA 95470
Erica Costa Berkey Williams LLP Round Valley Indian Tribes 430 D Street Davis, CA 95616	Curtis Berkey, Attorney Berkey Williams LLP Round Valley Indian Tribes 430 D Street Davis, CA 95616	Norman Whipple, President Round Valley Tribe 77826 Covello Road Covelo, CA 95428-9552
Peter Kiel Russian River Property Owners Association 11 Western Avenue P.O. Box 422 Petaluma, CA 94952	Brad Petersen, President Russian River Property Owners Association P.O. Box 2124 Healdsburg, CA 95448	Jaime Neary Policy Director & Staff Attorney Russian Riverkeeper 139 Healdsburg Avenue Healdsburg, CA 95448
Meghan Quinn, Director American Rivers Save California Salmon 120 Union Street Nevada City, CA 95959	Regina Chichizola Save California Salmon P.O. Box 142 191 East Perch Creek Road Orleans, CA 95556	Allie Hostler SCS Board President Save California Salmon P.O. Box 1044 Hoopa, CA 95546
Matthew Delbar Save Potter Valley Project P.O. Box Potter Valley, CA 95469	Save Potter Valley Project 8650 East Road Potter Valley, CA 95469	Alicia Bales Sierra Club-Redwood Chapter 501 N Pine Street Ukiah, CA 95482
Peter Kiel Sonoma County Agricultural Water Users 11 Western Avenue P.O. Box 422 Petaluma, CA 94952	Brad Peters Sonoma County Agricultural Water Users 11814 US Hwy 12 Packwood, WA 98361	Grant Davis, General Manager Sonoma County Agricultural Water Users 404 Aviation Blvd. Santa Rosa, CA 94503
Cory O'Donnell Deputy County Counsel Sonoma County Agricultural Water Users 575 Administration Drive, Rm 105 Santa Rosa, CA 95403	Steven Shupe Sonoma County Water Agency 575 Administration Drive, Room 105A Santa Rosa, CA 95403	Michael Swiger, Partner Van Ness Feldman, LLP Sonoma County Water Agency 2000 Pennsylvania Ave., NW Suite 6000 Washington, DC 20006
Jenna Mandell-Rice, Partner Van Ness Feldman, LLP Sonoma County Water Agency 1191 Second Avenue, Suite 1800 Seattle, WA 98101	Richard Roos-Collins Natural Heritage Institute Sonoma County Water Agency 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 801 Berkeley, CA 94704-1229	Michael Swiger, Partner Van Ness Feldman, LLP County of Sonoma 2000 Pennsylvania Ave., NW Suite 6000 Washington, DC 20006
Cory O'Donnell Deputy County Counsel County of Sonoma 575 Administration Drive, Rm 105 Santa Rosa, CA 95403	Adam Brand Assistant County Counsel County of Sonoma 575 Administration Dr., Rm 105A Santa Rosa, CA 95403	Kelly Henderson, Attorney Southern California Edison Company P.O. Box 800 Rosemead, CA 91770-0800

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Derek Wadsworth Water Resources Control Engineer State Water Resources Control Board 1001 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814	Michael Aoun Associate Government Program A State Water Resources Control Board 1001 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814	Wilhelmina Chon State Water Resources Control Board 1001 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814
Steve Tetrucj Tetrick Ranch 9802 Club Place Lane Carmel, CA 93923	Julie Gantenbein, Esq. Staff Attorney Tetrick Ranch 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 801 Berkeley, CA 94704	Matthew McKerley, Attorney Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP Trout Unlimited 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102
Kevin Bundy, Attorney Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP Trout Unlimited 396 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA 94102	Matt Clifford, Attorney Trout Unlimited 2550 9 th Street Berkeley, CA 94710	Don Perkins, General Manager Tuolumne Utilities District 18885 Nugget Blvd. Sonora, CA 95370
Dawn Alvarez National Hydropower Program Ma U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 1323 Club Drive Vallejo, CA 94592	Joshua Rider Office of General Counsel U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 630 Sansome Street, Room 1040 San Francisco, CA 94111	Viktoriya Sirova Regional Environmental Officer U.S. Department of Interior 1323 Club Drive Vallejo, CA 94592
Stephen Bowes U.S. Department of Interior 909 1 st Street, Suite 500 Seattle, WA 98104	Kerry O'Hara Attorney of Record U.S. Department of Interior 2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1712 Sacramento, CA 95825	Amy Aufdemberge Attorney of Record U.S. Department of Interior 2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1712 Sacramento, CA 95825
Elizabeth Dyer FERC Coordinator U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Reclamation 7794 Folsom Dam Road Folsom, CA 95630	Donald Ratcliff Field Supervisor U.S. Department of Interior U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service SF Bay Delta Fish and Wildlife Office 650 Capitol Mall, Suite 8-300 Sacramento, CA 95814	Nina Hemphill U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management 2800 Cottage Way Sacramento, CA 95825
Anna Brathwaite Attorney of Record Office of the Regional Solicitor 2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1712 Sacramento, CA 95825	Douglas Garcia Water Rights Specialist U.S. Department of Interior 2800 Cottage Way Sacramento, CA 95825	Regional Environmental Officer U.S. Department of Interior 2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1712 Sacramento, CA 95825
Arcata FWS FERC Coordinator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1655 Heindon Road Arcata, CA 95521	Hon. Adam Schiff United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Hon. Alex Padilla United States Senate Washington, DC 20510
David Rapport Rapport and Marston City of Ukiah 405 West Perkins Street Ukiah, CA 95482	Philip Williams City of Ukiah 210 South State Street Ukiah, CA 95482	Tucker Stewart, Senior Advisor U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 1400 Jefferson Drive, SW Washington, DC 20024
Aubrey Bettencourt, Chief U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Ave., SW Washington, DC 20250	Bob Anderson, Ex. Director United Winegrowers of Sonoma County 731 S Fitch Mountain Road Healdsburg, CA 95448-4600	April Hargis Supervisor Land Management PI USDA Forest Service 10025 Elk Mountain Road Upper Lake, CA 95485

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Patrick Redmond, Esq Attorney-Office of the Ge USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region 1400 Independence Ave., SW Room-3336-B Washington, DC 20250	Victor Aquirre Orozco USDA Forest Service-Region 5 Pacific Southwest Region 701 N Santa Anita Ave. Arcadia, CA 91006	Joshua Rider Office of General Counsel, USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region 630 Sansome Street, Room 1040 San Francisco, CA 94111
Kellie Whitton Fisheries Biologist USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region 2150 Centre Ave., Bldg. A, Ste. 368 Fort Collins, CO 80526	Tristan Leong Hydroelectric Coordinator USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region 1323 Club Drive Vallejo, CA 94592	Monique Sanchez Hydropower Coordinator USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region 1980 Old Mission Drive Solvang, CA 93463
Dawn Alvarez National Hydropower Program Ma USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region 1323 Club Drive Vallejo, CA 94592	Matthew Gerlomes Attorney USDA OGC USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region 630 Sansome Street, Rm 1040 San Francisco, CA 94111	Matt Fullner, General Manager Valley of the Moon Water District P.O. Box 280 El Verano, CA
Leah Castella Burke, Williams & Sorensen Valley of the Moon Water District 1999 Harrison Street, Ste. 1650 Oakland, CA 94612	David Widgerow Burke, Williams & Sorensen LLP Valley of the Moon Water District 501 W Broadway, Ste. 1600 San Diego, CA 92101	Michael Barrett Burke, Williams & Sorensen LLP Valley of the Moon Water District 181 3 rd Street, Ste. 200 San Rafael, CA 94901
Erica Costa Berkey Williams LLP Wiyot Tribe 430 D Street Davis, CA 95616	Curtis Berkey, Attorney Berkey Williams LLP Wiyot Tribe 430 D Street Davis, CA 95616	Joshua Horowitz, Attorney Bartkiewicz, Kronick & Shanahan Yuba County Water Agency 1011 22 nd Street Sacramento, CA 95816
Curt Aikens, General Manager Yuba County Water Agency 1220 F Street Marysville, CA 95901	Richard Roos-Collins Natural Heritage Institute California Trout, Inc. 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Ste. 801 Berkeley, CA 94704-1229	Michelle Lee The Circle Law Group, P.C. Potter Valley Tribe 930 F Street Sacramento, CA 95814
Jason Lee The Circle Law Group, P.C. Potter Valley Tribe 930 F Street Sacramento, CA 95814	Gregg Young Potter Valley Tribe 2251 S State Street Ukiah, CA 95482	

APPENDIX A. FERC SCOPING SESSION FORMAT AND CONDUCT

Session Format

FERC is conducting the session to solicit your scoping comments. There will not be a formal presentation by Commission staff; however, FERC staff is available to answer questions about the environmental review process. The session format is as follows:

- Tickets are handed out on a “first come, first serve” basis starting at the time listed in the Notice.
- Individuals are called in ticket number order to provide oral comments to be transcribed by a court reporter for the public record.
- Time limits on oral comments may be enforced to ensure that all those wishing to comment have the opportunity to do so within the designated session time.

Session Conduct

Proper conduct will help the sessions maintain a respectful atmosphere for attendees to learn about the FERC Environmental Review Process and to be able to provide comments effectively.

- Loudspeakers, lighting, oversized visual aids, or other visual or audible disturbances are not permitted.
- Disruptive video and photographic equipment may not be used.
- Conversations should be kept to a reasonable volume. Attendees should be respectful of those providing oral comments to the court reporters.
- Recorded interviews are not permitted within the session space.
- FERC reserves the right to end the session if disruptions interfere with the opportunity for individuals to provide oral comments or if there is a safety or security risk.