
State Water Resources Control Board

November 30, 2023

Ms. Jamie Visinoni
Hydro License Coordinator
Pacific Gas and Electricity Company
77 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
Sent via Email: jnvs@pge.com

**Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project No. 619
Plumas County
Bucks Creek, Grizzly Creek, Milk Ranch Creek, Tributaries to Milk Ranch Creek,
and Three Lakes Reservoir**

**APPROVAL OF TIME EXTENSION FOR COMPLETING A PORTION OF THE YEAR 1
BASELINE MONITORING IDENTIFIED IN THE GRAVEL AUGMENTATION PLAN
FOR BUCKS CREEK HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT**

Dear Ms. Visinoni:

On October 20, 2023, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) requested approval from the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Deputy Director of the Division of Water Rights (Deputy Director) for a time extension to complete a portion of the License Year 1 (Year 1) baseline gravel monitoring requirements identified in the Gravel Augmentation Plan (GAP).¹ The GAP is required by Condition 14: *Gravel Augmentation* of the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project (Project) water quality certification (certification).²

Background

The goal of the GAP is to improve trout spawning habitat and populations downstream of Project-affected reaches. The GAP requires gravel augmentation at two locations: (1) Bucks Creek downstream of Lower Bucks Dam Spillway; and (2) Grizzly Creek downstream of the Grizzly Creek gaging weir. Prior to gravel augmentation efforts, the GAP also requires the following baseline monitoring activities to be completed in Year 1

¹ The GAP was filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission by PG&E and the City of Santa Clara on September 20, 2019.

² The State Water Board Executive Director issued the Project certification on October 22, 2020, and on June 16, 2022, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a new license for the Project that included the certification conditions.

of the new Project license (i.e., between January 1 to December 31, 2023) at each location:

- (i) A topographic map of potential gravel placement areas within the survey site will be developed using a total station or similar survey equipment to record the contours of the site within the active channel (i.e., area of the channel that is regularly wetted during normal flows during the spawning season);
- (ii) Facies mapping of the survey area will be conducted, with surface sediment sizes recorded on a photographic or other appropriate base layer. Photos may be obtained from existing aerial photography, still photos from an appropriate local viewpoint (e.g., streamside cliff) or drone;
- (iii) Particle distributions will be assessed across a series of three monumented transects (in each creek) in potentially spawnable areas, using a pebble count;³
- (iv) Fine sediment content of spawnable gravel areas will be assessed by three McNeil samples per stream,⁴ with the fine sediment fraction estimated on-site by wet-sieving the samples. Substitute methods for assessing fine sediment may be employed after consultation with agencies; and
- (v) Photo points will be established throughout the survey site, and standardized photos taken at each location.

On September 14, 2023, representatives of the State Water Board and United States Forest Service attended a site visit to evaluate potential gravel augmentation sites for stream channel geomorphology, large woody debris, and riparian vegetation monitoring surveys in Bucks Creek and Grizzly Creek. Geomorphology, large woody debris, and riparian monitoring surveys are required by the Aquatic Resources Monitoring Plan⁵ during Year 1 and are intended to be conducted concurrently with the GAP to better assess the gravel augmentation locations. Two sites were identified during the site visit as suitable gravel augmentation locations: (1) Bucks Creek, about 0.3 miles downstream of Lower Bucks Dam Spillway; and (2) Grizzly Creek, about 400 feet downstream of Grizzly Creek gaging weir. PG&E intends to use helicopters to place gravel in the general vicinity of the selected sites, with the specific placement locations identified following consultation with helicopter pilots. Following the site visit in September 2023, PG&E completed the facies mapping (item ii above), particle distribution assessment using pebble counts (item iii above), and photo points at the two sites (item v above). The fine sediment was not measured because there were no spawning gravel patches present at either site (item iv above).

³ Wolman, M.G. 1954. A method of sampling coarse river-bed material. Transactions American Geophysical Union. Volume 35. Number 6. Pp. 951-956.

⁴ McNeil, William J., and Warren H. Ahnell. 1960. Measurement of gravel composition of salmon streambeds. Fish. Res. Inst. Circ. 120, Univ. Wash., Seattle. 6pp.

⁵ The Aquatic Monitoring Resources Plan was filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission by PG&E and the City of Santa Clara on September 20, 2019, and was approved with Project certification issuance on October 22, 2020.

By email dated October 20, 2023, PG&E requested an extension of time to complete the required topographic survey baseline monitoring and mapping (i.e., item i above). The extension of time is needed to allow PG&E sufficient time to consult with helicopter pilots to determine site accessibility and complete surveys following the winter season to account for any changes in topography due to high flows. Absent the extension of time, the geomorphology of the selected sites may change during the winter months, making topographic mapping less accurate and therefore useful in determining locations for the placement of spawning gravel.

Conditional Approval

State Water Board staff has reviewed PG&E's request and concurs with the time extension request for completion of the Year 1 baseline monitoring topographic survey with the following requirement:

- PG&E shall complete and provide results for the topographic survey (i.e., item i above) to the Deputy Director by August 1, 2024. Consistent with the GAP, PG&E shall provide the other components of the baseline monitoring activities to the Deputy Director by March 15, 2024.

If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Bryan Muro, Project Manager, by email at Bryan.Muro@waterboards.ca.gov. Written correspondence should be directed to:

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights – Water Quality Certification Program
Attn: Bryan Muro
P.O. Box 2000
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Sincerely,



Erik Ekdahl, Deputy Director
Division of Water Rights

ec: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Via e-filing to FERC Project Docket

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