



State Water Resources Control Board

October 23, 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 MILK RANCH CONDUIT DIVERSION MANAGEMENT WORK PLAN
AND TIME EXTENSION FOR COMPLETING WORK AT FEDERAL ENERGY
REGULATORY COMMISSION DIVERSION NO. 3**

Dear Ms. Visinoni:

On August 11, 2023, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) requested approval of the Milk Ranch Conduit Diversion Management Work Plan (Work Plan) from the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Deputy Director of the Division of Water Rights (Deputy Director). The Work Plan is required by Condition 8: *Milk Ranch Conduit Diversions Management* of the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project (Project) water quality certification (certification).¹ Additionally, on August 31, 2023, PG&E requested an extension of time to complete work to secure FERC diversion No. 3² that is required by certification Condition 2: *Cease Diversions at Milk Ranch Conduit Diversion No. 8*. Proposed work to secure FERC diversion No. 3 is included in the Work Plan.

Background

The Project is jointly owned by PG&E and the City of Santa Clara, and is located on lands managed by PG&E and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service) in Plumas National Forest. The Project consists of four dams, four reservoirs, two powerhouses, and associated facilities.

¹ The State Water Board Executive Director issued the Project certification on October 22, 2020, and on June 16, 2022, FERC issued a new license for the Project that included the certification conditions.

² FERC Diversion No. 3 is also referred to as Milk Ranch Conduit Diversion No. 8.

E. JOAQUIN ESQUIVEL, CHAIR | EILEEN SOBECK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Three Lakes Dam impounds flow from Milk Ranch Creek and Three Lakes Reservoir.³ The Milk Ranch Conduit conveys flow from 17 diversions beginning at Three Lakes Reservoir and the downstream outlet at Lower Bucks Lake. From Lower Bucks Lake water flows through the Grizzly⁴ Powerhouse Tunnel to Grizzly Forebay, which is impounded by the Grizzly Forebay Dam. Water then flows from Grizzly Forebay to the Bucks Creek Powerhouse and discharges into the North Fork Feather River above Rock Creek Powerhouse.

As required by Project certification Condition 8, PG&E must leave in place, and manage for safety and aesthetics, any existing inactive diversion structures along the Milk Ranch Conduit. Condition 8 further requires that PG&E leave inoperable (i.e., no longer divert flows) from FERC diversion Nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Per the certification, specific actions at FERC diversions No. 1, 5, 7, and 8 must be submitted in a work plan to the Deputy Director for review and approval prior to implementation.

Certification Condition 2 requires PG&E to, within 60 days of Project license issuance, cease diversion at FERC diversion No. 3, and subsequently install a cap or cover that will completely close the diversion pipe. On August 15, 2022, PG&E ceased diversions at FERC diversion No. 3. On September 23, 2022, PG&E requested a time extension until October 31, 2023, to complete installation of a cap or cover. On October 31, 2022, PG&E's time extension to October 31, 2023, was approved by the Deputy Director. On August 31, 2023, PG&E requested a second time extension, until October 31, 2024, to complete work at FERC diversion No. 3 because PG&E was unable to obtain all necessary approvals prior to the start of the winter season.

To comply with requirements of Project certification Conditions 2 and 8, PG&E developed the Work Plan that describes proposed actions (summarized below) that will be implemented at FERC diversion Nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, and 8.

Milk Ranch Conduit FERC Diversion Nos. 1 and 7: During State Water Board staff's July 2023 field visit, staff observed extensive vegetative growth and no exposed pipe at FERC diversion Nos. 1 and 7. No additional actions are needed for FERC diversion No. 1. For FERC diversion No. 7, PG&E will again search the FERC diversion No. 7 site for exposed pipes.

Milk Ranch Conduit FERC Diversion No. 3: On August 15, 2022, PG&E ceased diversion at FERC diversion No. 3 (Milk Ranch Conduit No. 8). Remaining work includes permanently securing the diversion. To permanently close the diversion, PG&E will cut the threaded rod and wheels that operate the gate valves to ensure the

³ Three Lakes Reservoir is comprised of three waterbodies: (1) Upper Lake; (2) Middle Lake; and (3) Lower Lake. Upper Lake is a naturally occurring waterbody, while Middle and Lower Lakes are formed by Three Lakes Dam.

⁴ In 1988, FERC issued the Grizzly Amendment, which authorized the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Grizzly Development that was completed in 1993. In 1988, Santa Clara became a joint licensee for the Project with respect to the Grizzly Development and has no ownership of other portions of the Project aside from the Grizzly Development.

values remain in a closed position. Additionally, PG&E will seal all open pipes and vents. The low-level outlet pipe will be filled with local rock and the ends of the pipe will be bent inward to close the pipe opening.

Milk Ranch Conduit FERC Diversion No. 5: PG&E will install a screen to the end of the exposed 10-inch-horizontal diversion pipe at the diversion structure. PG&E will monitor the stability of the diversion during wet water years.⁵

Milk Ranch Conduit FERC Diversion No. 8: During the July 2023 field visit, an exposed above-ground pipe was observed. PG&E will remove the pipe with a helicopter.

Conditional Approval: The Work Plan complies with requirements of Conditions 2 and 8 of the Project certification and is hereby conditionally approved with the following requirements:

- PG&E shall complete all proposed FERC diversion modifications by October 31, 2024.
- PG&E shall complete an additional on-the-ground search for exposed pipes at FERC diversion No. 7 by October 31, 2024. PG&E shall notify staff from the Forest Service, State Water Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service of the dates of the additional field search so staff may attend if desired. Within 60 days of completing the on-the-ground search, PG&E shall submit the results to the Forest Service, State Water Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Any additional work to FERC diversion No. 7 shall be submitted to the Deputy Director for review and approval as part of an update to the Work Plan.
- Per the Work Plan and Project certification Condition 8, PG&E will consult with the Forest Service and State Water Board staff if the diversion structure collapses at Milk Ranch Conduit FERC Diversion No. 5. If undermining or diversion structure collapse occurs, PG&E shall develop and submit for Deputy Director review and approval an updated workplan with appropriate mitigation actions that will be implemented upon Deputy Director approval.

PG&E shall file this approval and the Work Plan with FERC prior to implementation. Any revisions to the Work Plan that have the potential to affect water quality or beneficial uses shall be submitted for review and approval by the Deputy Director and filed with FERC prior to implementation.

⁵ Water year types are determined using California Department of Water Resources' (DWR) water year forecast of unimpaired runoff in the Feather River at Oroville as set forth in DWR's Bulletin 120. Water year types are categorized based on inflow at Lake Oroville. A Wet water year type is defined as an inflow of greater than or equal to 5,679 thousand acre-feet at Oroville.

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

Enclosure: Attachment 1. Table 10. Milk Ranch Conduit Diversions Status and Locations, as of 2017

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

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ATTACHMENT 1:
**TABLE 10 - MILK RANCH CONDUIT DIVERSIONS STATUS
AND LOCATIONS, AS OF 2017**

Table 10. Milk Ranch Conduit Diversions Status and Locations, as of 2017

FERC Diversion No. (licensed)	PG&E Diversion No. (proposed)	Stream Drainage	Diversion Status	Easting¹	Northing¹
1	--	--	Inactive	651398	4418798
2	9	--	Active	651313	4419738
3	8	Bear Ravine	Active ²	651633	4419902
4	--	--	Inactive	651377	4420560
5	--	--	Inactive	651364	4420593
6	--	--	Inactive	651098	4420817
7	--	-	Inactive	651049	4420823
8	--	--	Inactive	650856	4420850
9	7	Slide Ravine	Active	650294	4421100
10	6	Bear Trap Creek	Active	649900	4421474
11	5	N/A	Active	649591	4423096
12 and 13	4	N/A	Active	649931	4423444
14	3	South Fork Grouse Hollow Creek	Active	650493	4424947
15	2	North Fork Grouse Hollow Creek	Active	650582	4425208
Milk Ranch Creek	1	Milk Ranch Creek	Active	651220	4425622

¹ North American Datum 1983 Universal Transverse Mercator Zone 10N.

² Although actively maintained as part of the previous FERC Project license (issued in 1974), the Licensees shall cease diversion of instream flows from Bear Ravine into Milk Ranch Conduit at Milk Ranch Conduit Diversion No. 8, per the requirements of Condition 2 – Cease Diversions at Milk Ranch Conduit Diversion No. 8.