
State Water Resources Control Board

September 3, 2026

Mr. Jim McKay, Senior Land Planner
Pacific Gas and Electricity Company
Sent via Email: james.mckay@pge.com

Bucks and Grizzly Creek Gravel Augmentation Project
Plumas County
Bucks Creek and Grizzly Creek

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION FOR THE BUCKS AND GRIZZLY CREEK GRAVEL AUGMENTATION PROJECT

Dear Mr. McKay:

On September 9, 2025, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) received a water quality certification (certification) application from Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) for the Bucks and Grizzly Creek Gravel Augmentation Project (Project) pursuant to section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. § 1341). The Project is necessary for PG&E to implement requirements of Condition 14 (Gravel Augmentation) of the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project certification ([Order WQ 2026-0018¹](#)).

PG&E's certification application states that the Project will require a CWA Section 404 permit from the United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) and PG&E is pursuing coverage under USACE's Regional General Permit No. 16 – *Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Activities*.

Background

PG&E and the City of Santa Clara own, and PG&E operates the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project, which is also referred to as Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Project No. 619. The Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project is located on Bucks Creek, Grizzly Creek, Milk Ranch Creek, and Unnamed Milk Ranch Creek tributaries in the North Fork Feather River watershed in Plumas County. The Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project has an authorized installed capacity of 84.8 megawatts and is comprised of two developments: (1) Bucks Creek Development; and (2) Grizzly Development. The major components of the Bucks Creek Development include: Bucks Lake Dam, Bucks Lake Reservoir, Bucks Creek Penstocks, Bucks Powerhouse and Switchyard, Three Lakes Dam, Three Lakes (i.e., Lower Lake, Middle Lake, and Upper Lake), Milk Ranch Conduit, Lower Bucks Lake Dam, Lower Bucks Lake, Grizzly Forebay, Grizzly Forebay Dam, and Grizzly Forebay Tunnel. The major components of the Grizzly Development include the Grizzly Powerhouse Tunnel and the Grizzly Powerhouse.

¹ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/water_quality/2026/wqo2026-0018.pdf. Accessed on August 26, 2026.

The State Water Board's Executive Director issued the certification for the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project on October 22, 2020. On June 16, 2022, FERC issued a new license for the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project that included the certification conditions. The certification was amended on December 17, 2025. Additionally, on June 17, 2026, the State Water Board issued Order WQ 2026-0018 updating the certification in response to a petition for reconsideration of the October 2020 certification.

Condition 14 requires PG&E and the City of Santa Clara to implement a Gravel Augmentation Plan to improve trout populations by enhancing spawning habitat in Bucks Creek and Grizzly Creek downstream of Lower Bucks Dam and Grizzly Dam. As required by the Gravel Augmentation Plan, the first gravel placement at selected sites (Bucks Creek, about 0.3 miles downstream of Lower Bucks Dam Spillway; Grizzly Creek, about 400 feet downstream of the Grizzly Creek gaging weir) was required to occur in 2024 (Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project – License Year 2). On November 12, 2024, PG&E requested a time extension to complete the first gravel placement by October 31, 2025 (License Year 3) stating USACE determined that gravel placement requires a permit pursuant to section 404 of the CWA and additional time was needed to obtain the appropriate USACE permit. On March 24, 2025, the State Water Board's Deputy Director for the Division of Water Rights (Deputy Director) approved PG&E's time extension request. Additionally, on July 21, 2025, PG&E requested a second time extension to obtain the necessary permits (USACE 404 permit and State Water Board certification) for Gravel Plan implementation. On April 8, 2026, the Deputy Director approved the second time extension providing for gravel augmentation to occur by October 31, 2026, in License Year 4.

The Project involves the placement of approximately 37 cubic yards of gravel in Bucks and Grizzly Creeks (approximately 1,000 square feet, six inches deep per stream). Gravel will be mobilized during winter high flow events and will naturally distribute along the creek channels.

PG&E's certification application indicates 0 acres/0 cubic yards of temporary impacts to the streambed and 0.046 acres/37 cubic yards (0.023 acres/18.5 cubic yards per stream) of permanent impacts to the stream channel.

California Environmental Quality Act

Issuance of a certification is a discretionary action that requires the State Water Board to comply with CEQA. The State Water Board reviewed the Project and determined the CEQA requirements have been fulfilled by the Final Environmental Impact Statement² issued by FERC on January 28, 2020, in combination with a CEQA Supplement³ issued by the City of Santa Clara, and that there is no reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The State Water Board issued the Notice of Determination for activities covered by the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project certification under a new FERC license, including the Project, on October 23, 2020.

² On June 24, 2019, Santa Clara issued a Notice of Intent to Rely on FERC's Final Environmental Impact Statement, in combination with a supplemental analysis, to meet the requirements of CEQA.

³ Santa Clara's City Council adopted the final CEQA supplement for the Project on September 29, 2020, and Santa Clara's City Manager signed the document on October 5, 2020.

The State Water Board will file a new Notice of Determination with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation within five working days of issuance of this Project certification. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15062.)

Noticing and Comments

On October 9, 2025, State Water Board staff provided notice to PG&E that its certification application for the Project was complete and pending before the State Water Board in accordance with 40 Code of Federal Regulations part 121. Additionally, on October 24, 2025, the State Water Board provided public notice of PG&E's request for certification, pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3858, by posting information describing the request on the Division of Water Rights' Water Quality Certification Program Public Notices webpage and noticing the "Water Rights Water Quality Certification" email subscription list. The State Water Board received no comments in response to the notice. Additionally, on February 28, 2026, State Water Board staff shared the certification application with staff at the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and received no comments.

Certification Approval

ACCORDINGLY, BASED ON ITS INDEPENEDENT REVIEW OF THE RECORD, THE STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD CERTIFIES THAT THE BUCKS AND GRIZZLY CREEK GRAVEL AUGMENTATION PROJECT (PROJECT) will comply with section 301, 302, 303, 306, and 307 of the Clean Water Act, and with application provisions of State law under the following terms and conditions.

- (1) Unless otherwise changed by conditions of this water quality certification (certification) or approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Deputy Director of the Division of Water Rights (Deputy Director), Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E or Applicant) shall implement the Project as described in PG&E's September 9, 2025, certification application and as described in the Gravel Plan filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on September 20, 2019 in compliance with Condition 14 (Gravel Augmentation) of the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project certification and any amendments thereto. As stated in PG&E's certification application, this certification authorizes the placement of approximately 37 cubic yards of gravel in Bucks and Grizzly Creeks.
- (2) PG&E shall implement the Project in accordance with the [State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State](#) (Dredge or Fill Procedures)⁴ and amendments thereto.
- (3) This certification is subject to modification or revocation upon administrative or judicial review, including review pursuant to Water Code section 13330 and California Code of Regulations, title 23, division 3, chapter 28, article 6 (commencing with section 3867).
- (4) This certification is not intended and shall not be construed to apply to any activity involving a hydroelectric facility and requiring a FERC license or an amendment to a FERC license unless the pertinent certification application was filed pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3855, subdivision (b) and that application specifically identified that a FERC license or amendment to a FERC license

⁴ The Dredge or Fill Procedures are available online at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/cwa401/wrapp.html. Accessed on June 30, 2026.

for a hydroelectric facility was being sought. This certification is issued to PG&E in association with a United States Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act Section 404 action.

- (5) This certification is conditioned upon total payment of any fee required under California Code of Regulations, title 23, division 3, chapter 28 and owed by the applicant.

If you have questions regarding this certification or the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project, please contact Bryan Muro, Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project Manager, by email to: Bryan.Muro@waterboards.ca.gov or by phone call to: (916) 327-8702.

Sincerely,



Eric Oppenheimer
Executive Director

ec: Debbie Anne-Reese, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Via e-filing to FERC Project Docket No. 619

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