
State Water Resources Control Board

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR DRAFT WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION

MERCED IRRIGATION DISTRICT'S MERCED RIVER HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 2179 AND MERCED FALLS HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 2467

To: Interested Parties Mailing List

Pursuant to section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board or Board) has released a draft water quality certification (certification) for the Merced River Hydroelectric Project and Merced Falls Hydroelectric Project, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Project Nos. 2179 and 2467, respectively. The State Water Board is providing this opportunity for public review and comment on the draft certification.

Background

Merced Irrigation District (Merced ID) owns and operates the Merced River Hydroelectric Project (Merced River Project) and the Merced Falls Hydroelectric Project (Merced Falls Project) (collectively, Merced Projects). Merced ID is seeking new licenses from FERC for continued operation of the Merced Projects, which requires Merced ID to obtain certification from the State Water Board that operation of the Merced Projects will be protective of water quality and comply with water quality standards and other requirements of state law. On April 15, 2024, Merced ID submitted requests for certification for the Merced Projects to the State Water Board.

Brief Description of Merced Projects

The Merced Projects are located in the Merced River watershed, in Merced and Mariposa counties, California. The majority of the Merced Projects' facilities are located on federal land administered by the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management as part of the Sierra Resource Management Area. The major components of the Merced Projects include two reservoirs, one impoundment, three powerhouses, various access roads, and other appurtenant facilities. The Merced River Project has an authorized installed capacity of 101.25 megawatts and the Merced Falls Project has an authorized installed capacity of 3.4 megawatts. Additional background on the Merced Projects can be found in Appendix A of the draft water quality certification.

Water Quality Certification

In California, the State Water Board is responsible for protecting the State's water quality, including through issuance of certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. Certification must ensure compliance with water quality standards and other appropriate requirements of state law, such as water quality control plan standards. A

certification is required before FERC can issue a license for a project. If the State denies certification, FERC cannot issue a license for the project. If the State issues a certification with conditions, those conditions become conditions of the federal license.

Opportunity for Public Comment

This draft certification does not constitute final action by the State Water Board on Merced ID's requests for certification of the Merced Projects. The State Water Board is releasing this draft certification to provide the public with an opportunity to review and comment on draft conditions developed to protect water quality and beneficial uses. The comment period for the draft certification is from the date of this notice until February 28, 2025. **Comments on the draft certification must be received by 12:00 pm (noon) on Friday, February 28, 2025**, and can be submitted electronically (preferred) or by mail as follows:

Email (preferred):
WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov

or

Mail:
State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights – Water Quality Certification Program
Attn. Bryan Muro
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

The draft certification for the Merced Projects and additional information regarding the State Water Board's certification process for the project are available on the [Merced River Project](#)¹ and [Merced Falls Project](#).²

KEEP INFORMED OF PROJECT MILESTONES

To receive emails related to the Merced Projects and other similar projects overseen by the State Water Board's Division of Water Rights, interested persons should enroll in the "Water Rights Water Quality Certification" e-mail notification service. Instructions on how to sign up for the [State Water Board's Email Subscription List](#) are outlined below:

1. Visit:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/swrcb_subscribe.shtml
2. Provide your name and email in the required fields.
3. In the categories below the email and name fields, select "Water Rights," then "Water Rights Water Quality Certification."
4. Click the "Subscribe" button.
5. An email will be sent to you. You must respond to the email message to confirm your membership on the selected list(s).

¹ https://waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/mercedriver_ferc2179.html

² https://waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/mercedriver_ferc2179.html

By enrolling in this email list, you will receive notices related to the Division of Water Rights' Water Quality Certification Program work, including information pertaining to the Merced Projects' certification process. You can enroll or un-enroll from the email subscription service at any time. If you do not have internet access or do not wish to participate in the email subscription list, you may contact Bryan Muro by phone call to: (916) 327-8702 to request to receive notices by mail.

If you have questions related to this notice, the best means of contact is by email to: WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov.



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Water Quality Certification Program
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Date