

**DeSabra-Centerville Hydroelectric Project  
Responses to Comments on the Draft Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration**

On April 12, 2013, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) circulated: a draft Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND); a draft water quality certification (WQC); and a draft Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) for the DeSabra-Centerville Hydroelectric Project (Project). The Project is also known as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Project No. 803. The 60-day public comment period closed on June 13, 2013. During the comment period, the State Water Board received comment letters on the draft IS/MND from: the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), dated April 29, 2013; M&T Chico Ranch, dated June 10, 2013; and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), dated June 13, 2013. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the comments were considered. This document is a summary of the written comments received on the draft IS/MND, State Water Board's replies to those comments and, where applicable, the page(s) and paragraphs of the IS/MND where the text was revised to address each comment.

<b>Commenter, Affiliation (Comment Date)</b>	<b>Comment (Location of Comment in Comment Letter)</b>	<b>Reply</b>	<b>Location of Text Revision</b>
Jennifer Mata, BLM, Redding Field Office (April 26, 2013)	BLM has no comments on the draft IS/MND or draft WQC but recommends the State Water Board consolidate comment solicitation from BLM by sending correspondence to Jennifer Mata, Field Manager, of the Redding Field Office (page 1).	The contact for BLM correspondence is now updated in our records.	None required.
Les Heringer, M&T Chico Ranch (June 10, 2013)	M&T Chico Ranch is satisfied with the environmental documents and believes Butte Creek is at its maximum carrying capacity for salmon because all available spawning areas are being used. Additionally, there may not be adequate or additional cool water to allow increased numbers of salmon to survive during periods of excessive heat (page 1).	Comment noted.	None required.

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Tina Bartlett, CDFW (June 13, 2013)	If the Project has the potential to result in incidental take of listed plants or animals, a California Endangered Species Act (CESA) permit is required which is subject to CEQA documentation. To comply with the CESA, the IS/MND should specify activities that may result in a direct or indirect incidental take, measures to avoid and minimize take, measures to fully mitigate the take, and include a mitigation monitoring and reporting program (page 3, paragraph 1).	<p>The WQC includes a condition that requires the licensee to obtain authorization for any acts that may result in take prior to any construction or operation of that portion of the Project. However, the State Water Board expects that added protective measures, included as conditions in the FERC license and/or WQC, will reduce potential take of listed species.</p> <p>Some uncertainties remain regarding how California and federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) threatened spring-run Chinook populations will do over the term of the 30- to 50-year FERC license. To address these uncertainties, the WQC includes provisions for monitoring, and if necessary, action to protect ESA threatened spring-run Chinook populations. The WQC requires the development and implementation of conditions to address: (1) Federally- and State-Listed Anadromous Fish Monitoring; (2) Water Temperature Monitoring; (3) Canal and Powerhouse Operations Water Quality Monitoring; and (4) Long-Term and Annual Operations and Maintenance Plans and Annual Meetings to address necessary Project operational changes. Data collected during implementation of these conditions will inform the Operations Group. The Operations Group<sup>1</sup> may adjust Project operations as necessary to protect fishery resources.</p>	None required.

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<sup>1</sup> The Operations Group includes representative(s) from National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), CDFW, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), United States Forest Service (USFS), State Water Board, BLM, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, Friends of Butte Creek, American Whitewater, and Friends of the River.

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Tina Bartlett, CDFW (June 13, 2013)	Although the IS/MND states the Project would impact known populations of foothill yellow-legged frogs, the level of impact is not analyzed and no mitigation is proposed for the loss of riparian habitat and gravel bar areas. Without implementing appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures, the loss of riparian habitat and gravel bar areas may be considered significant under CEQA (page 3, paragraph 3).	<p>The potential adverse impact to foothill yellow-legged frogs from alteration of riparian habitat caused by increased instream flows in some reaches is considered to be less than significant. Normally, foothill yellow-legged frog breeding occurs from late March through May and tadpole rearing occurs from June to early August (Gonsolin 2010). Frog breeding, egg laying, and tadpole habitat generally occur in the same reaches characterized by relatively shallow, calm water areas where water temperatures are generally warmer (2-4°C) than main channel temperatures (Seltenrich 2002). Breeding begins when the water temperature increases to 12 – 15°C (Gonsolin 2010; Seltenrich 2002). In 2004 along the Poe Reach of the Feather River, breeding began when the instream temperatures reached 10°C (Gonsolin 2010). Breeding tends to occur in the same general area in multiple years unless stream conditions change, thereby creating unsuitable habitat for breeding (Seltenrich 2002). Egg development speed is dependent on water temperature; the cooler the water temperature, the slower the eggs mature (Ashton et. al. 1997).</p> <p>During relicensing, PG&amp;E conducted foothill yellow-legged frog surveys and temperature modeling on Butte Creek and the West Branch Feather River.</p> <p>Foothill yellow-frog surveys on the West Branch Feather River documented various life stages of foothill yellow-legged frogs seven miles downstream of Hendricks Diversion Dam (river mile 22). The life stages documented include egg masses, tadpoles, young of the year and adults (PG&amp;E 2008).</p>	<b>IS/MND:</b> Paragraphs 3 and 4, page 45. Paragraphs 1 and 2, page 46.

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		<p>Temperature modeling of the main channel of the West Branch Feather River from river mile 22 to river mile 15 in July shows that increases in minimum instream flows at Hendricks Diversion Dam of up to 50 cubic feet per second would not decrease instream temperatures below 16°C (FERC 2009, pg 3-125 &amp; 3-126). 16°C is above the breeding and rearing range of 10 to 15°C; thus adverse impacts due to water temperature are not expected if minimum instream flows are increased at the Hendricks Diversion Dam.</p> <p>Changes to minimum instream flows in Butte Creek are not predicted to impact yellow-legged frogs or the riparian vegetation communities because increased minimum flows: (1) are not large enough to significantly increase baseline scour; (2) do not coincide with the main vegetation growing season and; (3) are comparable to the modeled median annual instream flows from 1967-2005 in dry and normal water year types in Butte Creek near the DeSabla powerhouse and Lower Centerville Diversion Dam (PG&amp;E 2005).</p>	
Tina Bartlett, CDFW (June 13, 2013)	The IS/MND does not state which Project features are under jurisdiction of CDFW or whether a lake or streambed alteration agreement is needed for the Project (page 4, paragraph 2).	<p>Section 4 (Proposed Project) of the IS/MND identifies ground breaking activities that are part of the Project.</p> <p>The WQC includes a condition that no construction shall commence until all necessary federal, state, and local approvals are obtained.</p>	None required.

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Tina Bartlett, CDFW (June 13, 2013)	The Project would alter wetlands and riparian habitats, so a lake or streambed alteration agreement would be necessary for the Project. Because this agreement would require CDFW to comply with CEQA, the IS/MND should address all potential biological streambed alteration impacts and propose feasible mitigation, not just monitoring. Including this information in the IS/MND would avoid the need to conduct and document additional environmental review for issuing a lake or streambed alteration agreement (page 4, paragraph 2).	<p>The IS/MND document generally analyzes these types of impacts and Mitigation Measure 1 in the MMRP, Wetland Impacts from Ground Disturbance, requires delineation surveys, consistent with United States Army Corps of Engineers procedures. Such delineations will be conducted prior to beginning construction. If the wetlands are found, PG&amp;E will be required to submit a plan for approval to the Deputy Director for the Division of Water Rights (Deputy Director) to mitigate for wetland impacts. The plan shall comply with current State Water Board policies, orders, or regulations pertaining to wetlands.</p> <p>The WQC includes a condition that no construction shall commence until all necessary federal, state, and local approvals are obtained.</p>	Paragraphs 2 and 3, page 47.
Tina Bartlett, CDFW (June 13, 2013)	Because the Project could reduce a small amount of riparian habitat along the Lower Centerville Canal, the IS/MND should provide an estimate of the number of riparian trees greater than four inches in diameter as measured at breast height, or an estimate of the acreage of riparian habitat that may be impacted within the Project area and provide a detailed plan for restoring and monitoring this habitat (page 4, paragraph 3).	<p>The scope of work for the potential decommissioning of the Centerville Development is not part of the Proposed Project.</p> <p>Also, according to the Project's Final License Application (PG&amp;E 2007) riparian vegetation does not exist adjacent to and along the Lower Centerville Canal. Therefore, ceasing diversions into Lower Centerville Canal is not expected to have any impact on riparian vegetation along the Lower Centerville Canal.</p>	Paragraph 5, page 4.

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Tina Bartlett, CDFW (June 13, 2013)	The IS/MND should quantify direct and indirect impacts and temporary and permanent impacts to wetlands that are related to any construction and repairs to facilities that may reduce water loss or seepage (page 5, paragraph 1).	The IS/MND document generally analyzes these types of impacts and Mitigation Measure 1 in the MMRP, Wetland Impacts from Ground Disturbance, requires delineation surveys consistent with United States Army Corps of Engineers procedures. Delineations will be conducted prior to beginning construction. If wetlands are found, PG&E shall submit a plan for approval to the Deputy Director to mitigate for wetland impacts. The plan shall comply with current State Water Board policies, orders, or regulations pertaining to wetlands.	Paragraph 3, page 47.

**References**

- Ashton et.al. 1997. Foothill Yellow-legged Frog (*Rana boylei*) Natural History. USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station, Redwood Sciences Laboratory. 1997.
- FERC. 2009. Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for New Major Hydropower License: DeSabra-Centerville Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 803-087), California. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC. July 24, 2009.
- Gonsolin, Thomas E. 2010. Ecology of Foothill Yellow-legged Frogs in Upper Coyote Creek, Santa Clara County, CA. San Jose State University. Master's Thesis. December 2010.
- PG&E. 2005. Modeled unimpaired and regulated flows in Butte Creek above DeSabra Powerhouse for DeSabra-Centerville Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. 803 from 1986-2005. Pacific Gas and Electric Company.
- PG&E. 2007. DeSabra-Centerville Hydroelectric Project FERC Project No. 803, license application. Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Francisco, CA. October 2007.
- PG&E. 2008. Updated Study Results and Licensee Application Sections. Exhibit E, Section 6.0, Affected Environment: Updated Section 6.3.2.1 – Assessment of RT&E Amphibian and Aquatic Reptile Species Habitat near Project Reservoirs and Project-Affected Stream Reaches (Study 6.3.3-3). March 2008.
- Seltenrich, Craig P. et.al. 2002. A Standardized Approach for Habitat Assessments and Visual Encounter Surveys for the Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog (*Rana boylei*). Pacific Gas and Electric Company. May 2002.