

March 25, 2015

Peter Barnes
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Re: Upper North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project Draft EIR

To Whom it May Concern:

I am currently a resident of Lassen County, but lived in Chester from 1990-2010, and am writing to express my concerns regarding the State Water Resources Control Board's Upper North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Lake Almanor has been operated for the last 50 + years as a hydroproject. The community and surrounding environment has adjusted to this over these many years, but now significant changes are being proposed. From my understanding, PG&E, the county, and other stakeholders held extensive negotiations and developed a settlement agreement in 2004. That settlement provided more cold water flows down the river while maintaining enough cold water and suitable lake levels at Lake Almanor so that its recreational and resulting economic benefits would be preserved. Now for some reason the EIR includes two project alternatives that involve thermal curtains and even more water releases that would significantly impact Lake Almanor. Why are alternatives necessary when the proposal to operate per the settlement already provides beneficial changes that will lower the temperature of the river downstream?

Those that live in and visit Plumas County value the natural resources of Lake Almanor. The EIR's thermal curtain and increased cold water outflow alternatives will significantly impact the fishery and aesthetics of Lake Almanor. The EIR outright admits that these alternatives will significantly impact Lake Almanor's fisheries and potentially cause a massive fish kill. Why would the State Water Board consider alternatives that will harm Lake Almanor's beneficial uses by draining the lake of its cold water? The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is intended to prevent public agencies from harming the environment, and it seems that this proposal promotes bad policy in this instance.

The EIR blatantly fails to evaluate the recreational economy that is tied to the Lake Almanor fishery – an extremely important economic driver in this region and community - negative effects to the local fishery means resulting negative effects to Chester and the surrounding communities because fewer people will visit and fish the lake. The changes may ultimately result in additional closed and abandoned businesses and homes, and without question will negatively affect the economics of the nearby communities, particularly restaurants, hotels, resorts, sporting goods stores, and grocery stores, just to name a few. Eventually all of these negative effects will cause a decline in funds for public services.

The fishery is tied ecologically to other wildlife in the area; bald eagles and osprey rely on fish in the lake for their food, and the macro- and micro-invertebrates along with other species in the food chain will undoubtedly be affected by the water temperature changes and associated effects. These important issues should not be ignored.

I request that you reject the thermal curtain/increased release alternatives and ensure protection of Lake Almanor, Chester, and the surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

Melissa Nelson
716-195 Lake Leavitt Road
Susanville, CA 96130