
State Water Resources Control Board

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD, NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY, AND NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR RELIENSING OF THE HELMS PUMPED STORAGE PROJECT FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 2735

To: Trustee Agencies, Fresno and Madera County Clerks, and Interested Parties

On July 25, 2025, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Executive Director received a water quality certification (certification) application from Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing of the Helms Pumped Storage Project (Project) pursuant to section 401 of the Federal Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1341).

The State Water Board is the California Environmental Quality Act lead agency for the FERC relicensing of the Project and intends to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) to support the State Water Board's consideration and action on PG&E's request for certification. This information is provided to satisfy the formal written notice requirements for public review of an initial study (IS) and draft mitigated negative declaration (MND) (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15072). Notice is hereby given that the State Water Board is accepting comments on the IS/Draft MND for PG&E's proposed relicensing of the Project (Proposed Project).

Proposed Project Description

The Project is located in Fresno and Madera counties, California. The Project transfers water to and from Courtright Lake and Lake Wishon for power generation and water storage. Courtright Lake (upper reservoir) and Lake Wishon (lower reservoir), impounded by Courtright Dam on Helms Creek and Wishon Dam on the North Fork Kings River, respectively, are both licensed facilities of the Haas-Kings River Hydroelectric Project, which is owned and operated by PG&E. The Project includes intake and water conveyance systems, Helms Powerhouse and switchyard, a transmission and distribution line, several recreation sites (including Trapper Springs Campground, Marmot Rock Campground, Wee-Mee-Kute Fishing Access, Courtright Boat Launch, Lily Pad Campground, Upper Kings River Group Campground, Short Hair Creek Fishing Access, Wishon Dam Fishing Access, Spillway Fishing Access, Coolidge Meadow Fishing Access, Upper Kings River Fishing Access, Helms Picnic Area, and Wishon Boat Launch), access roads and trails, and an 80-acre wildlife habitat management area.

The Proposed Project involves the FERC relicensing of the 1,212-megawatt Helms Pumped Storage Project. PG&E has applied for a new FERC license for the Project (Proposed Project), under which it proposes to: (1) continue to operate the Project; (2) replace and rehabilitate existing recreation facilities; (3) designate approximately 36 miles of existing roads and approximately one mile of existing trails as Project roads and trails; (4) modify the FERC Project boundary to more accurately define lands necessary for Project operation and maintenance activities under a new FERC Project license; and (5) implement new protection, mitigation, and enhancement plans and measures.

Comment Submittal and Deadline

The State Water Board is accepting comments on the IS/Draft MND for the Proposed Project. The comment period is from the date of this notice through Friday, December 19, 2025. **Comments must be received by 5:00 pm on Friday, December 19, 2025.** Comments can be submitted as follows:

Email (preferred):

Jessica.Dyke@waterboards.ca.gov

or

Mail:

State Water Resources Control Board – Division of Water Rights
Water Quality Certification Program – Attention: Jessica Dyke
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

The IS/Draft MND is available on the State Water Board's [Helms Pumped Storage Project webpage](#).¹

If you cannot access the document online, hard copies of the IS/Draft MND for the Proposed Project will be available at the locations² below by no later than November 21, 2025:

Fresno County Library, Sanger Branch

1812 7th Street

Sanger, CA 93657

(559) 875-2435

Open Monday through Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Madera County Library, Main Branch

121 N. G Street

Madera, CA 93637

(559) 675-7871

Open Monday through Thursday 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

State Water Resources Control Board/CalEPA Building

¹ https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/helms-pumped-storage.html

² The hours of operation are provided as a courtesy and may vary for holidays or other reasons.

1001 I Street,
2nd Floor Records Room, Room 2-114
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 341-5300

Open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Appointments preferred.

Schedule an appointment by emailing: dwr@waterboards.ca.gov

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

1685 "E" Street
Fresno, CA 93706
(559) 445-5116

Open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Appointments preferred.

Schedule an appointment by emailing: info5@waterboards.ca.gov

STAY INFORMED

To receive emails related to the Helms Pumped Storage Project Relicensing and other projects pursuing certifications managed by the 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 the [State Water Board's Email Subscription webpage](#).³
2. Provide your email in the required fields, then click the "Submit" button.
3. In the next page, below Subscription Topics, select "Water Rights," then "Water Rights Water Quality Certification".
4. Click the "Submit" button.
5. An email will be sent to you. You must respond to the email message to confirm your membership on the selected Topic(s).

By enrolling in this email list, you will receive notices for other current projects in the Division of Water Rights' Water Quality Certification Program, including the Helms Pumped Storage Project Relicensing. If you do not have internet access or do not wish to participate in the email notification list, you may contact Jessica Dyke by phone at: (916) 541-3448 and leave a message to request to receive notices by mail. You can enroll or un-enroll from the email notification service at any time.

If you have questions regarding this notice please contact Jessica Dyke, Project Manager, by email to: Jessica.Dyke@waterboards.ca.gov, or by phone call to: (916) 341-5448.

Sincerely,



Erin Ragazzi
Assistant Deputy Director
Division of Water Rights

November 17, 2025
Date

³ https://waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/