# State Water Resources Control Board

## NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND SCOPING MEETINGS FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE LEE VINING HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT RELICENSING FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 1388

To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, California Native American Tribes, Interested Parties, and Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)[1], the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) plans to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the Lee Vining Hydroelectric Project Relicensing (Proposed Project).

**Applicant:** Southern California Edison Company

**Project Name:** Lee Vining Hydroelectric Project Relicensing

**Project Location:** The Proposed Project is located on Glacier Creek and Lee Vining Creek in Mono County. The nearest city is Lee Vining, approximately five miles northeast of the Proposed Project's Poole Powerhouse.

**Overview**

Southern California Edison (SCE) owns and operates the Lee Vining Hydroelectric Project (Hydroelectric Project), which is licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The Proposed Project involves the relicensing (continued operation) of the existing Hydroelectric Project for a presumed 50-year term with proposed changes as described in the *Proposed Project Description* section below.

**The State Water Board is seeking comments from trustee agencies, responsible agencies, Tribes, and interested parties concerning the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. Please send comments to Bryan Muro, Hydroelectric Project Manager, as noted in the *Submittal of Written Comments* section below.**

**Description of the Existing Lee Vining Hydroelectric Project**

The Hydroelectric Project consists of: (1) three main dams and reservoirs (Saddlebag, Tioga, and Ellery); (2) a 1.2-mile flowline, consisting of a 2,530-foot-long pipeline followed by a 3,741-foot-long penstock, connecting Ellery Lake to Poole Powerhouse; (3) seven stream and reservoir gages; (4) two access roads; and (5) the 11.25-megawatt Poole Powerhouse.

[1] Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.

Water stored in Saddlebag and Tioga reservoirs is discharged through Lee Vining and Glacier Creeks, respectively, to Ellery Lake, where water is either diverted into the flowline to Poole Powerhouse or spills over Rhinedollar Dam (forms Ellery Lake), and then discharges to Lee Vining Creek (see Figure 1 Project Location Map). SCE does not operate any recreational facilities as part of the Hydroelectric Project, but United States Forest Service (USFS)-managed recreation sites and informal recreation sites are located adjacent to the FERC Hydroelectric Project boundary. These recreation sites include trailheads, campgrounds, and day use sites.

Main Hydroelectric Project components are summarized below:

- Saddlebag Dam: Saddlebag Dam is located on Lee Vining Creek approximately five miles upstream of Poole Powerhouse and impounds Saddlebag Lake (usable storage capacity of 9,765 acre-feet (af)). Saddlebag Dam is a 45-foot-high by 600-foot-long geomembrane-lined redwood-faced rockfill dam equipped with a 54-foot-wide spillway (1,436 cubic feet per second (cfs) maximum spill capacity) and a low-level outlet (approximately 150 cfs maximum capacity). The spillway and low-level outlet discharge to Lee Vining Creek upstream of Ellery Lake.
- Tioga Dam and Tioga Auxiliary Dam: Tioga Dam and Tioga Auxiliary Dam are located on Glacier Creek approximately three miles upstream of Poole Powerhouse and together impound Tioga Lake (usable storage capacity of 1,254 af). Tioga Dam is a 27-foot-high by 270-foot-long, geomembrane-lined redwood-faced rockfill dam equipped with a 57-foot-wide spillway (1,460 cfs maximum spill capacity) and a low-level outlet (approximately 82 cfs maximum capacity). Tioga Auxiliary Dam is a 19-foot-high by 50-foot-long concrete arch dam equipped with two auxiliary spillway bays (combined 760 cfs maximum spill capacity). Both dams discharge to Glacier Creek which flows into Lee Vining Creek and then into Ellery Lake.
- Rhinedollar Dam: Rhinedollar Dam is located on Lee Vining Creek approximately 1.25-miles upstream of Poole Powerhouse and impounds Ellery Lake (usable storage capacity of 493 af). Rhinedollar Dam is a 19-foot-high (17 feet with a two-foot concrete parapet), 437-foot-long rockfill dam equipped with three 12-foot-wide spillways (combined 1,820 cfs maximum spill capacity) and an intake structure that diverts water (110 cfs maximum capacity) to a 6,271-foot-long flowline that can discharge directly to Lee Vining Creek or into Poole Powerhouse and then Lee Vining Creek.
- Poole Powerhouse: Poole Powerhouse is a 68-foot-long by 38-foot-wide building located on Lee Vining Creek approximately nine miles upstream from Mono Lake and the town of Lee Vining. The powerhouse contains one Pelton turbine with a nameplate capacity of 11.25 megawatts along with ancillary equipment and structures.

No transmission lines are included as part of the Hydroelectric Project.

**Proposed Project Description**

SCE is requesting to relicense the Hydroelectric Project. SCE did not request a particular license term. As such, this CEQA analysis assumes a 50-year term (the maximum relicensing term provided by FERC). The Proposed Project involves continued operations and maintenance with the following changes:

- **Proposed Project Boundary Updates**
  - The Proposed Project includes a net reduction of approximately 73 acres of land in the FERC boundary from 615.5 to 542.25-acres. The Proposed Project boundary update is to better align with modern spatial data.
- **Proposed Project Measures**
  The Proposed Project includes new or modified protection, mitigation, or enhancement measures and plans for environmental resource and tribal/historic resource management. These measures and plans include:
  - Water Management: In relation to current license requirements, this measure includes short (1 – 3 week) increases in spring flow releases (up to 16 cfs below Saddlebag Lake and 8 cfs below Tioga Lake compared to existing license requirements) and a reduction (decrease of up to 5 cfs from current license requirements) in flow below Saddlebag Lake for the remainder of the year. Additionally, under the Proposed Project, Poole Powerhouse required releases may decrease by up to 79 cfs in June-July of dry water years compared to existing license requirements.
  - Enhanced Fish Stocking: This measure involves stocking 2,000 catchable trout or its equivalent in Hydroelectric Project reservoirs annually, with locations and timing to be determined in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
  - Resource Management Plan: This plan involves implementation of protection measures for botanical, wildlife, and rare, threatened, and endangered species during Hydroelectric Project operations and maintenance activities.
  - Invasive Species Monitoring: This measure involves implementation of specific best management practices and monitoring every three years for three existing populations of cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*) in the Hydroelectric Project area, with a goal of containing those populations.
  - Historic Properties Management Plan: This plan describes the guidelines for monitoring archaeological sites as well as procedures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate direct and indirect effects to eligible or listed resources on the National Register of Historic Places.
  - Erosion and Sediment Control Plan: This plan describes measures to be implemented for soil stabilization, erosion protection, sediment reduction, and dust control.

Additional Information regarding the Proposed Project is available on the State Water Board's Lee Vining Hydroelectric Project webpage[2].

[2] https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/lee-vining-ferc1388.html. Last accessed: August 4, 2026.

**Scoping Meetings**

The State Water Board will hold two virtual scoping meetings to provide information about the Proposed Project, the CEQA process, and to receive written or oral comments from trustee agencies, responsible agencies, Tribes, and other interested parties concerning the range of alternatives, potential significant effects, and mitigation measures that should be analyzed in the EIR. The time allotted for each person to provide oral comments may be limited if the number of people wishing to comment so requires. Scoping meetings will conclude after all interested persons have provided their comments. The scoping meetings will be recorded and documented by transcript.

Details of the scoping meetings are provided below. **You must register to attend the virtual meetings using the links below. Once you register, you will receive an email with a meeting invite.**

**Tuesday, October 13, 2026**
**Starting at 12:00 p.m.**
**Registration Link:**
https://waterboards.zoom.us/meeting/register/OITiARc2TwSDmDiG9MlyGQ

**Tuesday, October 13, 2026**
**Starting at 5:30 p.m.**
**Registration Link:**
https://waterboards.zoom.us/meeting/register/vC8150gSSuCwqKVxCJZmmg

Each scoping meeting will conclude after all interested persons have provided their comments.

**This is not a State Water Board meeting.** It is possible that one or more State Water Board members may attend the virtual meeting; however, no State Water Board deliberation or action will take place. A quorum of the State Water Board will not be present.

If you have questions related to these meetings or would like to make a request for reasonable accommodations for a disability, please call Bryan Muro, Hydroelectric Project Manager, at: (916) 327-8702 or email: wr401program@waterboards.ca.gov..

**Submittal of Written Comments**

The State Water Board is seeking comments from trustee agencies, responsible agencies, Tribes, and interested parties concerning the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. Please provide the name and contact information for a person that may be contacted if there are questions about the comment(s). **The comment deadline is 4:00 pm on Monday, October 19, 2026. Please title your comments "Lee Vining NOP Comments"** and send them to Bryan Muro, Hydroelectric Project Manager, by:

**Email (preferred):**
**wr401program@waterboards.ca.gov**

**or**

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

**State Water Board's Water Quality Certification**

Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1341) requires every applicant for a federal license or permit that may result in a discharge into navigable waters to provide the federal licensing or permitting agency with certification that the project will comply with state water quality standards and other appropriate requirements of state law. Section 401 provides that conditions of certification shall become conditions of any federal license or permit for the project. The State Water Board is the agency in California that is responsible for issuing section 401 certifications for hydroelectric facilities licensed by FERC. (Wat. Code, § 13160; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 23, § 3855, subd. (b).)

When the State Water Board considers issuing a water quality certification for a project it evaluates whether the project will comply with applicable water quality standards and other requirements of state law and determines conditions necessary to protect water quality. In California, water quality standards are established in regional water quality control plans and state water quality control plans or policies. Water quality control plans designate the beneficial uses of waters to be protected and establish the water quality objectives necessary to protect those uses, as required under section 303 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1313) and sections 13240 and 13241 of the California Water Code.

The State Water Board may issue a certification if it determines that the Proposed Project will comply with specified provisions of the Clean Water Act, including water quality standards and implementation plans, and other appropriate requirements of state law. The State Water Board must determine whether the Proposed Project adequately protects the beneficial uses and meets the water quality objectives for waterbodies in the Proposed Project area. Beneficial uses and water quality objectives are listed in the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's *Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region* (Basin Plan). Additional information concerning the Basin Plan and designated beneficial uses are available at the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's Basin Plan webpage[3].

**CEQA Information**

Issuance of a water quality certification is a "discretionary action" requiring compliance with CEQA. The State Water Board, as lead agency under CEQA, plans to prepare a draft EIR for the Proposed Project.

[3] https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/lahontan/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/references.html. Last accessed: August 4, 2026.

*Environmental Factors Potentially Affected*
The EIR will evaluate potentially significant impacts of the Proposed Project for a range of resource areas. The State Water Board has identified the following environmental factors potentially affected by the Proposed Project.

- Biological Resources
  - The Proposed Project has the potential to affect, either directly or through habitat modifications, species identified as threatened, endangered, candidate, sensitive, or special status in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Hydrology/Water Quality
  - The Proposed Project has the potential to exceed water quality standards or waste discharge requirements.
- Tribal Cultural Resources
  - The Proposed Project has the potential to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource.

**Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Process**
FERC is the federal agency that regulates the construction, operation, and decommissioning of most non-federal hydroelectric dams in the United States. On January 29, 2025, SCE filed a final license application for the Proposed Project with FERC. SCE supplemented its final license application on July 15, 2026. Any conditions included in a State Water Board-issued certification for the Proposed Project will become conditions of any new FERC license issued for the Hydroelectric Project.

***KEEP INFORMED OF PROPOSED PROJECT MILESTONES***

To receive emails related to the Hydroelectric Project 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 Updates webpage (http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions).
2. Click "State Water Resources Control Board" and provide your email in the required fields, then click the "Submit" button.
3. In the next page, below Subscription Topics, select "Water Rights" and 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 Lee Vining Hydroelectric Project. You can enroll or un-enroll from the email notification service at any time. If you do not have internet access or do not wish to participate in the email notification list, you may contact Bryan Muro by phone call to: (916) 327-8702 to request to receive notices by mail.

**Questions and Additional Information**

If you have questions regarding this notice the best means of contact is by email. General questions regarding the water quality certification and CEQA processes for the Proposed Project should be directed to Bryan Muro, Hydroelectric Project Manager, by email to: Bryan.Muro@waterboards.ca.gov, or by phone call to: (916) 327-8702.

Sincerely,

Parker Thaler

Parker Thaler
Water Quality Certification Program Manager
Division of Water Rights

September 16, 2026
Date

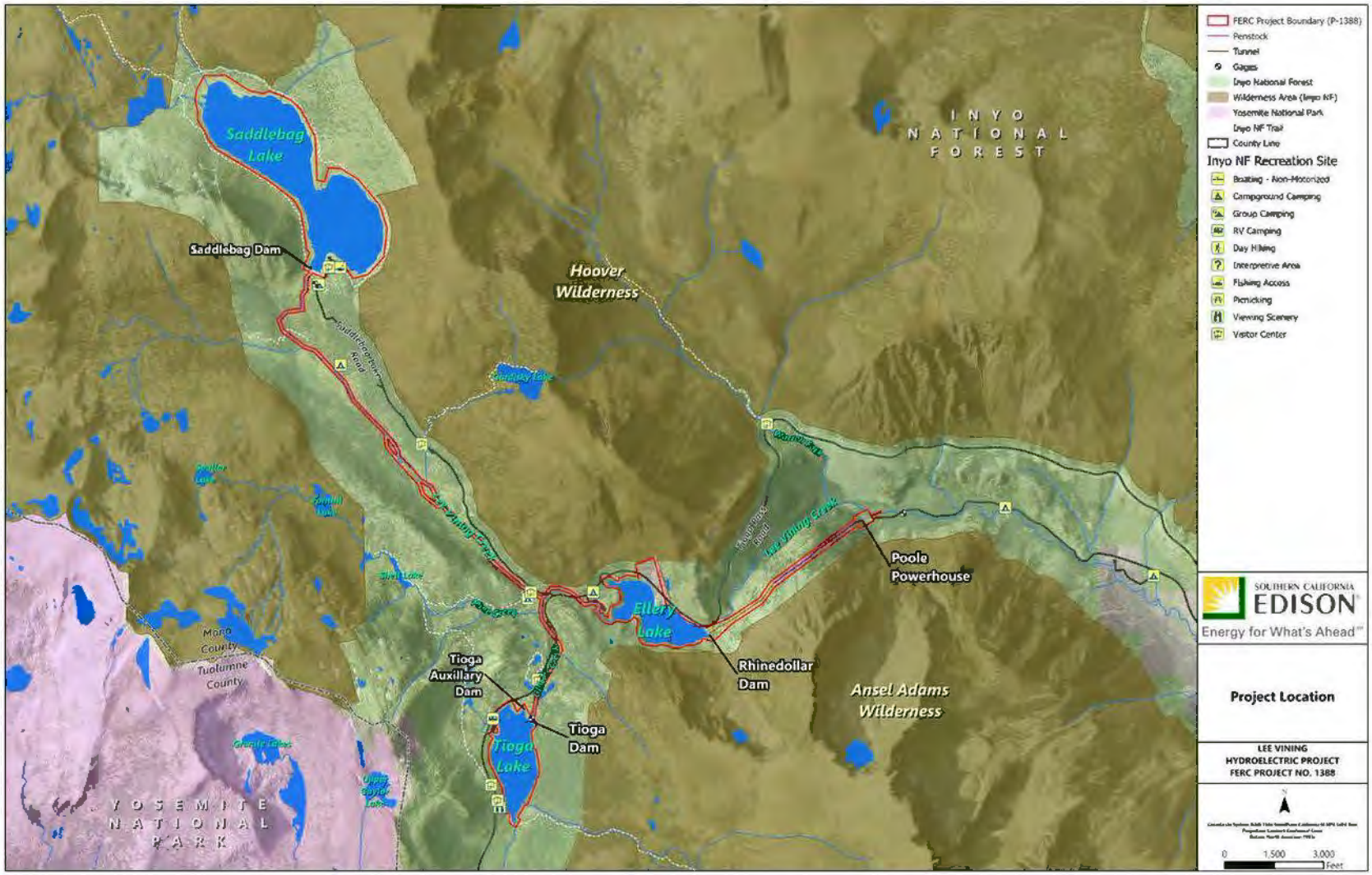


**Figure 1. Project Location Map.**
**(Source: SCE's Lee Vining Pre-Application Document)**

# Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that I have this day filed electronically with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and served the Notice of Preparation for an Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meetings for the Lee Vining Hydroelectric Project relicensing upon each person designated on the official service list of the Project compiled by the Secretary in this proceeding.

Dated this 16th day of September 2026.

Bryan Muro
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Bryan Muro
Water Resources Control Engineer
Division of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board
Bryan.muro@waterboards.ca.gov