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

To: Trustee Agencies, Fresno County Clerk, Tribes, and Interested Parties

On January 16, 2026, 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 Helms Uprate Project (Proposed 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 Proposed Project and intends to adopt a Negative Declaration (ND) to support the State Water Board's consideration and action on PG&E's request for certification of the Proposed Project. This information is provided to satisfy the formal written notice requirements for public review of a draft initial study and negative declaration (IS/ND) (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15072). Notice is hereby given that the State Water Board is accepting comments on the draft IS/ND for PG&E's Proposed Project.

Proposed Project Description

The Proposed Project, located in Fresno County, California, is associated with a pending non-capacity license amendment for PG&E's Helms Pumped Storage Project (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project No. 2735) that transfers water to and from Courtright Lake and Wishon Reservoir for power generation. Courtright Lake (upper reservoir) is impounded by Courtright Dam on Helms Creek and Wishon Reservoir (lower reservoir) is impounded by Wishon Dam on the North Fork Kings River.

The Proposed Project would replace the three existing pump-turbine generator units in Helms Powerhouse with more efficient, higher-capacity units that would result in an increase in the Helms Pumped Storage Project's normal operating capacity of 180,000 kilowatts (a 14.9 percent increase) and a maximum hydraulic capacity increase of about 1,550 cubic feet per second (a 14.8 percent increase). The Proposed Project would include the use and improvement of existing staging areas, construction of a warehouse with utilities, limited tree removal, grading, utility extensions, equipment transport, and related construction support activities within existing PG&E property. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2029 and last for approximately three years.

Comment Submittal and Deadline
The State Water Board is accepting comments on the draft IS/ND for the Proposed Project. The comment period is from the date of this notice through Monday, December 7, 2026. **Comments must be received by 5:00 pm on Monday, December 7, 2027.** Comments can be submitted as follows:

Email (preferred):
WR401Program@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 draft IS/ND 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 draft IS/ND for the Proposed Project will be available at the locations[2] below by no later than November 6, 2026.

State Water Resources Control Board/CalEPA Building
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

[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.

STAY INFORMED

To receive emails related to the Helms Uprate 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 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 Uprate Project. 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 call to: (916) 341-5448 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 by email to: Jessica.Dyke@waterboards.ca.gov, or by phone call to: (916) 341-5448.

Sincerely,

Parker Thaler 11/4/26

Parker Thaler
Program Manager
Division of Water Rights

Date

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