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House of Representatives

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October 17, 2005

Ms. Tam M. Doduc, Chair
Water Resources Control Board
State of California
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Doduc:

I am writing to convey my public comments to the California State Water Resources Control Board (Board) as it conducts its public scoping in order to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) regarding water quality and water temperature in the Feather River downstream of Lake Almanor. The Board is exploring the possibility of mandating the installation of thermal curtains in Lake Almanor and Butt Reservoir as a stipulation of Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E's) application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a new license to generate hydroelectric power at Canyon Dam and other Lake Almanor Project facilities (FERC No. 2105). I appreciate the opportunity to echo the negative sentiments expressed by elected leaders, local officials, and several of my constituents in the Lake Almanor area of Plumas County (County) regarding the proposed installation of thermal curtains.

As you know, after diligent and sincere efforts by County officials and residents as well as PG&E authorities, a final settlement agreement resolving many complex and important issues surrounding the FERC license was executed by a multitude of parties in April 2004. While this agreement settled numerous aspects contained in the new license, several pressing issues still remain disputed, including shoreline erosion, the length of the license, and most importantly, cold water releases from Lake Almanor. Specifically, I am writing today to express my opposition to any Board mandate that includes scientifically unsupported thermal curtains around the Prattville Intake structure and in Butt Reservoir. I believe the thermal curtain proposal has been sufficiently vetted, and I encourage state officials to officially remove this prospect from the FERC 2105 process.

It is my understanding that this curtain proposal has been forwarded to comply with agreements as delineated in the Rock Creek-Cresta Relicensing Settlement Agreement (FERC No. 1962). This license compelled PG&E to make reasonable attempts to maintain water temperature of 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) or less in the Feather River between Rock Creek Dam and Cresta Power House. Significantly, this license contained the term "reasonable" to describe the measures PG&E is to implement to reach this goal. Clearly, after factoring the cost

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associated with constructing this structure, the impacts to the communities around Lake Almanor and the devastation of the fisheries in Butt Lake and Lake Almanor, this temperature control mechanism can be called anything but reasonable.

I am dismayed that the FERC 2105 license has been hijacked by a detail outlined in a previous license and that my constituents in the Lake Almanor area are expected to solely bear the burden of this action. It should be stressed that the installation of this curtain would result in the removal of nearly 50 percent of the cold water contained in Lake Almanor. The removal of this amount of cold water will have a devastating impact on the lake ecosystem and its world-renowned fisheries. In addition to the dramatic resource damage, homeowners and the greater community around Lake Almanor stand to suffer from the unsightly visual impacts of the structure, negative impacts on boating and other recreation, and decreased tourism that could coincide with the severe reduction of cold water in Lake Almanor.

While pointing out the severe deficiencies and negative ramifications of the thermal curtain proposal, I am pleased to join with County stakeholders and PG&E officials in supporting an alternative that will help improve the watershed and environment while protecting the communities that have blossomed around Lake Almanor. As such, I fully support the Watershed Restoration and Improvement Alternative forwarded by the local community and believe that the offsite mitigation measures included in this proposal would bring substantial and measurable positive results to the area.

I have been impressed with the well-organized and respectful manner in which Lake Almanor citizens, County officials, and Native American tribal members have conducted themselves during this entire process. In addition, I appreciate the Board's willingness to allow local stakeholders to craft solutions for problems regarding new licenses. Now, due to the unreasonable costs and environmental destruction that would result from these thermal curtains, I urge you to remove the thermal curtain proposal from the process entirely. It is paramount that Board members and other agency officials consider the far reaching socio-economic and environmental implications of a thermal curtain mandate. A scientifically unsupported curtain proposal that will not achieve Board goals is an unacceptable solution to this process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my field representative, Chris Parilo, at 916-786-5560 with any questions or comments on this issue.

Sincerely,



JOHN T. DOOLITTLE
United States Representative

cc: Ms. Magalie R. Salas, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission