ORIGINAL

February 17, 2022

Kimberly Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, N.E., Rm 1A
Washington, D.C. 20428

Re: FERC Project 2105, Upper North Fork Feather River Project

Dear Commissioners:

My wife and I own a home at 811 Lassen View Drive on the peninsula of Lake Almanor, and are directly affected by FERC Project 2105. I am a retired civil engineer and fisheries biologist with experience in the licensing and relicensing of hydroelectric projects. Having directly observed the conditions at Lake Almanor, and having reviewed relevant project documents, I offer the following comments and perspective.

One of the important beneficial uses of Lake Almanor is cold freshwater habitat. In July 2020, the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) issued its Water Quality Certification (WQC) for Project 2105 proposing increased cold-water discharges from Lake Almanor beyond those specified in the 2004 Relicensing Settlement Agreement. The objective of the cold-water discharges is to reduce downstream water temperatures in the North Fork of the Feather River. It is noted that the impact of these proposed increased discharges on the already stressed cold freshwater habitat of Lake Almanor is uncertain.

Since the SWRCB published the WQC for Project 2105, a massive forest fire, the Dixie Fire (started July 13, 2021), burned through much of the watershed of Lake Almanor. Studies have shown that forest fires often result in the warming of runoff to downstream water bodies, as shade is reduced within the forest. Nutrient loads also often increase as minerals in ash leach into the runoff. Warm, nutrient rich runoff flowing into Lake Almanor from areas burned by the Dixie Fire will only exacerbate the stress on the cold freshwater habitat of the lake. Cyanobacteria blooms already occur in late summer and fall at Lake Almanor, and warm nutrient rich influent flows will only contribute to this problem.

In closing, the dynamics of the Lake Almanor ecosystem have likely changed in the aftermath of the devastating Dixie Fire. The increased cold-water discharges proposed by the SWRCB as specified in the WQC would only increase water temperatures in the lake, further stressing the cold freshwater habitat, and degrading water quality. I request that FERC reject the proposed increased discharges of cold water from Lake Almanor as specified in the WQC.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Aaserude, P.E.

Document Content(s)