

COVER SHEET

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE
UPPER NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER PROJECT

Project No. 2105-089

COVER LETTER

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FEIS

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, DC 20426

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

TO THE PARTY ADDRESSED:

Reference: Final Environmental Impact Statement

Attached is the final environmental impact statement (final EIS) for the Upper North Fork Feather River Project (FERC No. 2105), located on the North Fork Feather River and Butt Creek, in Plumas County, California. This final EIS has been prepared pursuant to requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) regulations implementing NEPA (18 CFR Part 380).

This final EIS documents the view of governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, affected Indian tribes, the public, the license applicant, and Commission staff. It contains staff evaluations on the applicant's proposal and the alternatives for relicensing the Upper North Fork Feather River Project.

The final EIS contains an analysis of Section 18 fishway prescriptions and Section 10(j) recommendations which were filed by NOAA Fisheries on March 14, 2005, after issuance of the draft EIS. The final EIS also contains an analysis of potential measures for providing colder water to the Upper North Fork Feather River during the summer. Because these analyses first appear in the final EIS, you are specifically invited to file comments on these three items in this document. Any comments, conclusions, or recommendations that draw upon studies, reports, or other working papers should be supported by appropriate documentation. Your comments will be considered in the Commission's order in this proceeding.

Comments should be filed with Magalie R. Salas, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20426. All comments must be filed by December 19, 2005, and should reference Project No. 2105-089. Comments may be filed electronically via the Internet in lieu of paper. The Commission strongly encourages electronic filings. See 18 CFR 385.2001(a)(1)(iii) and instructions on the Commission's website at <http://www.ferc.gov> under the eLibrary link.

Before the Commission makes a licensing decision, it will take into account all concerns relevant to the public interest. The final EIS will be part of the record from which the Commission will make its decision.

Copies of the final EIS are available for review in the Commission's Public Reference Branch, Room 2A, located at 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20426.

The final EIS also may be viewed on the Internet at www.ferc.gov under the eLibrary link. Please call (202) 502-8822 for assistance.

Attachment: Final Environmental Impact Statement

COVER SHEET

- a. Title: Relicensing the Upper North Fork Feather River Project in Plumas County, California, FERC Project No. 2105-089
- b. Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement
- c. Lead Agency: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- d. Abstract: Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) filed an application for a new license for the existing Upper North Fork Feather River (UNFFR) Project, which is located on the North Fork Feather River, in the vicinity of the community of Chester, Plumas County, California. The UNFFR Project generates 1,171.9 gigawatt-hours of electricity annually.

The final environmental impact statement (EIS) presents the staff's evaluation of the developmental and non-developmental consequences of PG&E's proposal, alternatives to the proposed action, and the no-action alternative. Key issues associated with relicensing this project include providing appropriate minimum flows in the bypassed reaches, whether enhancement of the supply of gravel and other native materials is needed, management of Lake Almanor water surface elevations and its effect on nearshore and riparian habitat, controlling invasive weeds, protecting threatened and endangered species, providing recreational enhancements, and protecting cultural resources.

The staff's recommendation is to relicense the project as proposed, with additional measures to protect and enhance environmental resources, including various measures to protect and monitor water quality; measures to control flows to the bypassed reaches and manage Lake Almanor water levels to enhance habitat for aquatic biota; monitoring aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial plants, fish, and wildlife; protective measures for fish and wildlife; various recreational enhancements; and development of several land use plans.

- e. Contact: John Mudre
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Office of Energy Projects
888 First Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20426
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- f. Transmittal: This final EIS prepared by the Commission's staff on the hydroelectric license application filed by PG&E for the existing Upper North Fork Feather River Project (FERC No. 2105-089) is being made available to the public on or about November 10, 2005, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969¹ and the Commission's Regulations Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (18 CFR Part 380).

¹ National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, amended (Pub. L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, January 1, 1970, as amended by Pub. L. 94-52, July 3, 1975, Pub. L. 94-83, August 9, 1975, and Pub. L. 97-258, §4(b), September 13, 1982).

FOREWORD

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission), pursuant to the Federal Power Act (FPA)² and the U.S. Department of Energy Organization Act³ is authorized to issue licenses for up to 50 years for the construction and operation of non-federal hydroelectric development subject to its jurisdiction, on the necessary conditions:

That the project ... shall be such as in the judgment of the Commission will be best adapted to a comprehensive plan for improving or developing a waterway or waterways for the use or benefit of interstate or foreign commerce, for the improvement and utilization of water-power development, for the adequate protection, mitigation, and enhancement of fish and wildlife (including related spawning grounds and habitat), and for other beneficial public uses, including irrigation, flood control, water supply, and recreational and other purposes referred to in Section 4(e)...⁴

The Commission may require such other conditions not inconsistent with the FPA as may be found necessary to provide for the various public interests to be served by the project.⁵ Compliance with such conditions during the licensing period is required. The Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure allow any person objecting to a licensee's compliance or noncompliance with such conditions to file a complaint noting the basis for such objection for the Commission's consideration.⁶

² 16 U.S.C. §791(a)-825r, as amended by the Electric Consumers Protection Act of 1986, Public Law 99-495 (1986), and the Energy Policy Act of 1992, Public Law 102-486 (1992).

³ Public Law 95-91, 91 Stat. 556 (1977).

⁴ 16 U.S.C. §803(a)(1).

⁵ 16 U.S.C. §803(g).

⁶ 18 CFR §385.206 (1987).