

## MEETING NOTES

UNFFR PROJECT RELICENSING (FERC No. 2105)  
Recreation, Land Use, and Aesthetics Work Group Meeting  
September 27, 2002  
9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.  
Chester Memorial Hall, Chester, CA

### Attendees/Distribution List:

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## Discussion

PG&E called the meeting to order and provided a general overview of the intended focus of the day's meeting. The primary objectives of this meeting were to provide a summary of PG&E responses to Plumas County comments regarding the UNFFR draft license application (DLA), address lake level issues, and establish agreement status on Plumas County's relicensing goals and objectives. Since PG&E's response to Plumas comments would be contained in the final license application (FLA), which people can read, this item was skipped.

### Final License Application Recreation Proposals

PG&E provided a handout and map that summarized the current FLA's recreation proposals. These proposals were scheduled to be implemented in ten year increments based on anticipated recreation demand/need during the license period. High priority proposals are scheduled to be implemented in the first ten years (0 to 10 years) from license issuance, moderate priority proposals in 10 to 20 years, and low priority in 20 to 30 years. Many of the 0-10 year proposals were identified as immediately needed and are scheduled as initial items to start to be implemented soon after FERC issuance of the license. PG&E is proposing to invest over \$21 million dollars toward recreation improvements over the license term. About 2/3 of capital expenditures are scheduled to occur during the first ten year period and the majority of these, which were primarily shoreline day use facilities, are scheduled as initial issuance items. PG&E indicated that given the large amount of facilities planned to be constructed in the first ten years and the length of environmental and other permitting process, actual completion of the projects may run into the next ten year period. PG&E asked the attendees to look over this list and offer suggestions for any improvements. No improvements were suggested. The attendees generally were supportive of the recreation proposals.

The topic of recreation use triggers was discussed including their effects on the timing of new recreation developments areas. Some attendees indicated that they did not completely understand how PG&E developed the "triggers" for specified recreational areas. PG&E indicated triggers were in part based on information provided by the Forest Service. The Forest Service noted in the meeting that they were still in the process of researching their own triggers and would share their findings upon the end of their assessment.

Another concern of the attendees was that they wanted it noted somewhere in the FERC final license application that alternative sites would be investigated in case proposed areas that were designated for "new facilities" could not be used due to unforeseen causes (such as species listings or EIR/planning problems). For the proposed east shore campground, some attendees suggested an alternative site could be across Highway 147 (if necessary), whether it was on PG&E property or not. PG&E indicated that the site selection process included analysis of sensitive environmental information such as endangered species, wetlands, and cultural resources and they did not anticipate that such concerns would stop the construction of a particular proposal. The proposed location for

the east shore campground, though, since the location is outside of the existing project boundary, did not have a cultural resurvey conducted. PG&E suggested that, if needed, an alternative site across the highway was not out of the question; but an alternative site along the shore of the lake on PG&E lands would be a more desirable recreation location.

Another issue was that due to inflation, potentially PG&E would not have the money to implement a measure planned in the future. PG&E commented that although PM&E costs, even those in the future, are represented 2002 dollars, per FERC regulations, PG&E's internal financial review and approval, though, of PM&E costs factors in inflation. Once part of the FERC license, PG&E is responsible to appropriately financing current and future recreation facilities.

### Lake Level

PG&E's senior hydrologist (Bruce McGurk) addressed lake level issues and competing demands for water at the Project and downstream. He is the area water forecaster for PG&E.

To begin the discussion of lake level, the senior hydrologist provided some background information on the lake for meeting attendees. He explained that 50% of the water in the lake comes from springs and underground sources. Of the average annual inflow of 650,000-acre feet, only half of it is from the local streams. About 100,000-acre feet of water evaporates annually. This evaporation mainly occurs in the summer months. The senior hydrologist showed many different overhead slides on the historical lake levels from 1971 to the present. He showed the direct correlation of lake levels to the dynamic weather cycles of the region.

The senior hydrologist presented four operating principles that he uses to make recommendations to energy managers while forecasting and scheduling that affect lake level. These principles include:

1. Recreational effects: This is a very important objective for PG&E. He minimizes withdrawals from the lake from January through June to reach a high lake level and thereby support recreation activities and access. This results in generally high lake levels in June to support the community and their recreational needs. Lake Almanor had hardly any water drafted from it this year (January to June). PG&E started drafting water out of Lake Almanor in July of this year.
2. Hydroelectric power: He tries to operate the project in an efficient manner and provide flows at the right time. His goals are to create power, store water, and use water when needed. Hydroelectric power is best used when the need and use of electricity is highest (i.e. daylight, summer days).
3. Irrigation: PG&E must meet certain downstream contractual irrigation requirements. For example, PG&E must deliver 145,000-acre feet of water to Lake Oroville by

October 31. Because of evaporation losses from Lake Oroville and inflow, PG&E must release approximately 200,000 acre-feet.

4. **Flood Control:** PG&E has 99 reservoirs that have seasonal storage capability. Lake Almanor is the only reservoir that is able to store water from one year to the next. He explained that the lake level must be dropped when heavy winters are forecasted, such as the El Nino winter of 1998.

Lake Almanor is ten times larger than the next largest PG&E reservoir, so it is hard to spread the burden of providing summer time electricity to these other reservoirs, which are also generally used for recreation purposes.

The 2105 Committee indicated that they are pursuing written lake level requirements in the next FERC license. The hydrologist indicated that PG&E was already implementing certain elements of the 2105 Committee's lake level request, provided at a previous meeting. In particular, the provision to minimize drafting water out during the spring, to maximize the water level for the beginning of the summer recreation season. The minimum water level proposal requested by the 2105 Committee, though, was not physically possible for many reasons. The main constraints to a new, high minimum lake level requirement are water rights and climatic variations from year to year. The senior hydrologist explained that PG&E must initiate and use its water rights as required by state law or face losing these rights. If their water rights are not used and initiated and they are lost to others, then everyone will lose.

PG&E explained that high lake levels must be balanced with other competing demands for the water. The senior hydrologist explained in great detail that a higher lake level cannot be consistently maintained from year to year because of variable climatic conditions. He discussed details about dry and wet seasons, and how flexibility to draft the lake to low levels by December 31 is necessary to meet generation, irrigation, and flood control purposes. Three handouts were given to attendees to represent pool levels and discharge flows under differing weather conditions. The maximum storage capacities of California reservoirs were also presented along with average annual draw downs at other California reservoirs. Considering other CA reservoirs, not much was being drawn from Lake Almanor by comparison. Relative to other California reservoirs, recreation users and shoreline residents at Lake Almanor experience much less variation in pool level and draw down. It was suggested by the 2105 Committee that perhaps PG&E and the 2105 Committee sit down and use the 1986 operating guideline as a starting point for lake level discussion. PG&E agreed, but also indicated that other stakeholders also influence this issue.

#### *Plumas County Goals and Objectives*

PG&E handed out an agreement status table identifying Plumas County 2105 Committee's Goals and Objectives and an indication of which PM&E's in the FLA addressed these goals and objectives or a reason why not. The group reviewed this table and decided on which goals and objectives there was agreement between PG&E and the