



# Media Release

## **State Water Board and FERC Ready to Assist the State's Hydropower Generators as Drought Conditions Persist**

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Sacramento - With extreme drought conditions persisting throughout California and efforts underway to conserve water already in reservoirs, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) announced today it will work closely with state hydropower generators seeking flexibility in how much water they release downstream through their dams.

Today's announcement follows a letter from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to California hydropower generators advising them to begin working with state and federal resource and regulatory agencies to seek variances from their licenses and allow them to keep water behind their dams.

The State Water Board contacted FERC earlier this week to seek support for hydropower licensees who want to quickly respond to drought conditions.

"The State Water Board welcomes FERC's support in responding to California's drought and supports FERC's message to begin consulting promptly with state and federal resource agencies, Native American Tribes and other entities to determine whether, and to what extent, to modify flow release requirements," said State Water Board Executive Director Tom Howard.

The State Water Board encourages early engagement from hydropower owners that may be interested in modifying flow related elements of the certification conditions within their licenses. Information on the State Water Board's [Water Quality Certification Program](#) for FERC hydropower projects is available online.

In response to the drought conditions, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a [letter](#) on Feb. 6 offering assistance to the owners and operators of the 128 hydropower projects in California. As stated in the letter, FERC is "prepared to act swiftly to review requests and amend licenses on a temporary or long-term basis, as appropriate, in order to conserve water resources at FERC-licensed hydroelectric projects." FERC recognizes the need for hydropower owners and operators to consult with the appropriate resource agencies and entities when required by the project license.

The State Water Board is responsible for ensuring hydropower projects meet water quality standards. The State Water Board issues water quality certifications under Section 401 of the



Clean Water Act, which then become part of the FERC license when issued to power generators.

Yesterday's [FERC letter](#) contains a list of the 128 hydropower projects in California.

The State Water Board has modified reservoir levels and water releases in the past in response to dry conditions. In 2012, the State Water Board approved lower Pinecrest Lake levels in response to a request from Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). In January 2014, the State Water Board approved reduced flows and reservoir levels for Relief Reservoir, part of PG&E's Spring-Gap-Stanislaus Hydroelectric Project.

Information on other drought year water actions the State Water Board is taking to conserve water supplies in upstream reservoirs and allow reservoir operators to more effectively operate their facilities in response to ongoing drought conditions is available [online](#), including the Jan. 31 approval of a temporary urgency change petition for the State and Federal Water Projects.

With California facing its driest year on record, Governor Brown declared a [drought State of Emergency](#) last month and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for water shortages. Governor Brown spoke with President Obama last week about crucial federal support during the ongoing drought, and the state [continues](#) to work with [federal partners](#) to ensure a [coordinated](#) drought response.

The Department of General Services is leading water [conservation efforts](#) in state facilities, and the Department of Transportation is cutting water usage along California's roadways by 50 percent. In January, the state took [action to conserve](#) water in numerous Northern California reservoirs to meet minimum needs for operations that impact the environment and the economy. Recently the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Fish and Game Commission [restricted fishing](#) on [some waterways](#) due to low water flows worsened by the drought. Last month, CAL FIRE hired 125 [additional firefighters](#) to help address the increased fire threat due to drought conditions, the California Department of Public Health identified and offered [assistance](#) to communities at risk of severe drinking water shortages and the California Department of Food and Agriculture launched a [drought website](#) to help farmers, ranchers and farmworkers find resources and assistance programs that may be available to them during the drought. Also last month, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency and CDFA released the [California Water Action Plan](#), which will guide state efforts to enhance water supply reliability, restore damaged and destroyed ecosystems and improve the resilience of our infrastructure.

Governor Brown has called on all Californians to voluntarily reduce their water usage by 20 percent, and the [Save Our Water](#) campaign launched four [public service announcements](#) encouraging residents to conserve. Last December, the Governor formed a [Drought Task Force](#) to review expected water allocations and California's preparedness for water scarcity. In May 2013, Governor Brown issued an [Executive Order](#) to direct state water officials to expedite the review and processing of voluntary transfers of water and water rights.

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