
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

1 September 2017

Daniel Sanchez, Water Quality Manager
Pacific Gas and Electric Company
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San Ramon, CA 94583

CERTIFIED MAIL
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NOTICE OF APPLICABILITY

WATER QUALITY ORDER 2003-0003-DWQ, STATEWIDE WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS FOR DISCHARGES TO LAND WITH A LOW THREAT TO WATER QUALITY, PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY, HELMS TUNNEL GROUTING PROJECT, FRESNO COUNTY

On 17 July 2017, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) submitted a Notice of Intent (NOI) to obtain coverage under Water Quality Order No. 2003-0003-DWQ, *Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges to Land with a Low Threat to Water Quality* (hereafter General Order) for discharge of dewatered groundwater to land during the tunnel grouting repair project (Project) at Helms Powerhouse near Wishon Reservoir in Fresno County. Tunnel grouting will take place over a 15-day period starting in September 2017. During grouting operations, groundwater seepage into the tunnel will be collected, stored, and characterized prior to discharge. The discharge will be to unpaved US Forest Service roads for dust control, private land for irrigation of crops, and/or to stormwater catch basins operated by the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District (FMFCD). Additional information to complete the application was submitted on 9 August and 28 August 2017.

The submittal contains all the information required to evaluate applicability of the General Order. Based on the information provided in the NOI and supplemental information, the discharge meets the conditions of the General Order. The discharge is hereby covered under **General Order No. 2003-0003-DWQ-0177**. Please include this number on all correspondence related to this discharge.

PROJECT LOCATION

Helms Powerhouse is approximately 50 miles east of Fresno in the Sierra Nevada. The staging area for the Project will be along Powerhouse Road on the north end of Wishon Reservoir in Fresno County. This portion of Fresno County is within the Tulare Lake Basin.

The *Water Quality Control Plan for the Tulare Lake Basin, Second Edition*, revised July 2016 (hereafter Basin Plan), designates beneficial uses, establishes water quality objectives, and contains implementation programs and policies to achieve water quality objectives for all waters of the Basin.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Helms Powerhouse is a hydroelectric power station owned and operated by PG&E. Underground tunnels convey surface water between Courtright and Wishon Reservoirs to generate electricity. Leakage from the tunnels is causing water loss and nuisance flows into the powerhouse. The proposed tunnel grouting project is part of PG&E's maintenance plan to repair the tunnel.

Prior to grouting, the tunnel will be drained and engineering controls will be implemented to minimize seepage into the tunnel. During grouting operations, groundwater seepage into the tunnel will be collected and piped to a portable storage tank for settling and pH adjustment, if necessary. According to PG&E's Discharge Monitoring Plan (DMP), submitted with the NOI, representative samples of the wastewater will be collected for analysis prior to initiating discharge. The samples will be analyzed for pH, specific conductivity, total suspended solids, and CAM 17 metals. Field measurements for pH will be collected daily and the pH adjusted accordingly to ensure the discharge pH remains between 6.5 and 8.5.

The discharge will comply with PG&E's Best Management Practices (BMPs) for non-stormwater discharges. As part of its DMP, PG&E personnel will monitor all discharges to land on a daily basis to verify compliance with best management practices at the point of discharge and to ensure the discharge does not create a nuisance and that no runoff or discharge to surface water occurs.

Due to the nature of the Project, the volume of water to be discharge is unknown but could range from several hundred thousand to several million gallons. Given the unknown volume, PG&E has proposed several disposal options including discharge to stormwater catch basins operated by the FMFCD, as dust control on unpaved US Forest service roads, and irrigation of crops on agricultural land. PG&E currently has agreements in place with the FMFCD, and US Forest Service.

As detailed in their agreement with the US Forest Service water discharged as dust control on Forest Service lands will not be applied within 75 feet of any stream crossing or meadow. In addition, the discharge will not be applied on roads within critical habitats for the Yosemite toad and Sierra Nevada yellow legged frog. Attachment A is a map provided by the US Forest Service identifying streams, meadows, and critical habitats areas within the proposed discharge area.

The General Order and this Notice of Applicability (NOA) regulate the discharge of dewatered groundwater from tunnel grouting operations at Helms Powerhouse in Fresno County to US Forest Service lands, specifically for dust control on unpaved roads. As of the date of this NOA, PG&E has not provided landowner authorization for reuse of dewatered groundwater to private land for irrigation of crops. This NOA may be amended to add additional properties if necessary upon request by PG&E with permission from the appropriate property owner. The discharge of dewatered groundwater to FMFCD's stormwater catch basins may be allowed as a non-stormwater discharge under the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Order R5-2013-0080-01 (NPDES No. CA00883500) provided that the discharge is not identified as a source of pollutants to waters of the United States.

FACILITY-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

1. Discharge of water at a location or in a manner different from that described in the NOI and supplemental information is prohibited.
2. PG&E will instruct all personnel transporting and/or applying wastewater in accordance with this NOA on all procedures applicable to the discharge point as specified in the

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signed Discharge Agreement between PG&E and the specified party (i.e., US Forest Service, or individual property owner).

3. All technical reports required herein that involve evaluation, or other work requiring interpretation and proper application of engineering or geologic sciences, shall be prepared by or under the direction of persons registered to practice in California pursuant to California Business and Professions Code, section 6735, 7835, and 7835.1. As required by these laws, completed technical reports must bear the signature(s) and seal(s) of the registered professional(s) in a manner such that all work can be clearly attributed to the professional responsible for the work.
4. In accordance with the General Order's Monitoring and Reporting Program, all monitoring results including volume and location of discharges as well as all monitoring conducted as part of the Discharger's DMP shall be recorded and submitted on a semi-annual basis.
5. The Discharger shall submit the required annual fee (as specified in the annual billing statement issued by the State Water Resources Control Board) until this Notice of Applicability is terminated.
6. Failure to abide by the conditions of the General Order, including its monitoring and reporting requirements, and this letter authorizing applicability could result in enforcement actions, as authorized by provisions of the California Water Code.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Central Valley Water Board) has gone to a Paperless Office System. All regulatory documents, submissions, materials, data, monitoring reports, and correspondence should be converted to a searchable Portable Document Format (PDF) and submitted electronically. Documents that are less than 50MB should be emailed to: centralvalleyfresno@waterboards.ca.gov. Documents that are 50MB or larger should be transferred to a disk and mailed to the Central Valley Water Board office at 1685 E Street, Fresno, CA 93706. To ensure that your submittals are routed to the appropriate staff, the following information block should be included in any email used to transmit documents to this office:

Program: Non-15, Place ID: 837321, Facility Name: PG&E Helms Tunnel Grouting Project,
Enrollee Number: 2003-0003-DWQ-0177.

If you have any questions regarding this NOA, please contact Katie Carpenter at (559) 445-5551 or by email at kcarpenter@waterboards.ca.gov.



for Pamela C. Creedon
Executive Officer

Attachment A: US Forest Service Map identifying streams, meadows, and critical habitat

Enclosures: Water Quality Order No. 2003-0003-DWQ

cc: Ray Porter, US Forest Service, High Sierra Ranger District, P.O. Box 559, Prather, CA 93651
Daniel Rourke, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, 5469 E. Olive, Fresno, CA 93727

ATTACHMENT A

