



Media Release

State Water Board Adopts New Power Plant Compliance Deadlines

Sept. 1, 2020

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SACRAMENTO – Today the State Water Resources Control Board approved an amendment to its [Once-Through Cooling \(OTC\) Policy](#) for four power plants along the coast. The amendment extends compliance or phase-out dates for the facilities, all of which use ocean waters for cooling as part of the power generation process.

The amendment is responsive to a request by the state’s energy, utility, and grid operators and regulators to maintain, for a definitive period, four OCT plants as power choices. The plants are needed to provide more energy grid stability and reliability, as additional energy and storage resources are built over the next three years.

“Once-through cooling power plant operations impose heavy environmental impacts on our oceans and communities, and an extension of these compliance dates aren’t without significant consideration,” said E. Joaquin Esquivel, Chair of the State Water Board. “The Board is called to balance the complex and overarching needs of the state, and here appropriately weigh energy reliability considerations even in the pursuit of these important policies.”

The amendment extends Once-Through Cooling Policy compliance or phase-out dates at four fossil fuel power plants, of an original nineteen facilities when the policy was adopted in 2010. The plants and extensions are as follows:

- A three-year extension of the compliance date for Alamitos, Huntington Beach and Ormond Beach generating stations to Dec. 31, 2023
- A one-year extension of the compliance date for Redondo Beach Generating Station to Dec. 31, 2021

Additionally, the amendment revises compliance dates at the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant to conform the Once-Through Cooling Policy expiration dates for each unit to those in the corresponding nuclear operating license.

California’s Once-Through Cooling policy, which became effective October 1, 2010, seeks to protect marine life when water from the ocean or estuaries is used for cooling at power plants. Using ocean water for once-through cooling kills millions of fish, larvae, eggs, seals, sea lions, turtles, and other creatures each year when they are either trapped against screens or drawn into the cooling system and exposed to pressure and



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high heat. Power plants are required to either reduce the velocity of ocean water intake flows or reduce impacts by other comparable means. Many power plants have chosen to comply by stopping use of once-through cooling operations.

The policy acknowledges that compliance date changes may be necessary to support grid reliability. The Board created the multi-agency Statewide Advisory Committee on Cooling Water Intake Structures (SACCWIS) to regularly monitor grid reliability and provide recommendations to the Board if extensions are necessary.

The committee identified possible grid reliability issues in March 2019, and, in January 2020, recommended the Board consider extending the compliance dates of the four fossil-fuels power plants. The amendment is based on the [SACCWIS recommendation](#).

The amendment was prompted by changes in California's energy demands since 2019. These include a shift in peak energy demand to later in the day and later in the year, when solar and wind resources are not as reliably available to meet demand. The amendment also addresses other energy related factors, including a lower qualifying capacity for wind and solar power than previously determined, a significant increase in projected reliance on imported electricity over historical levels, and earlier-than-expected closures of some inland power plants.

As the recent extreme heat event in California has shown, more power is needed for peak usage on hot days until 2023, when renewable energy sources are scheduled to be online to cover anticipated demand.

The [State Water Resources Control Board](#) is charged with implementing federal Clean Water Act Section 316(b), which states that the location, design, construction and capacity of cooling water intake structures must reflect the best technology available to protect aquatic life. The power plants operate under National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, which the nine regional water boards will modify to implement the amendment to the OTC Policy. The public is invited to participate in the permitting process.

Please see the [OTC Policy's Official Policy Documentation](#). A [Once Through Cooling Fact Sheet](#) has additional information on the history of this policy, documenting efforts by the energy industry to stay in compliance.

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