

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

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In the Matter of Water Quality Certification for

**EL DORADO IRRIGATION DISTRICT  
CAPLES LAKE OUTLET EMERGENCY REPAIR PROJECT**

Sources: Caples Lake tributary to Caples Creek thence Silver Fork of South Fork American River thence South Fork American River thence American River

County: Alpine County

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**Project Description**

El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) Project 184 is located on the South Fork American River and its tributaries. The project was initially constructed to provide irrigation water, and hydroelectric operations began in 1924. EID purchased Project 184 from the Pacific Gas and Electric Company and in April 1999, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved the transfer of the federal license to EID to operate Project 184. In September 1999, the California Public Utilities Commission approved the transfer of project facilities and related assets, including water rights, to EID. EID now holds the following water rights on Caples Lake: License 438 (Application 654), License 2541 (Application 1441), and Permit 21112 (Application 5645B).

Caples Lake Reservoir covers 624 acres with an active usable storage of 20,338 acre-feet. Full pond elevation is at 7,797.7 feet National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD). Caples Lake dam is 1,200 feet in length, with an 84.5 feet high gunite core, earthfill main dam, with a crest elevation of 7,804.4 feet NGVD. The discharge tunnel is 403 feet in length and is controlled by three 2.5-feet by 2.5-feet slide gates at different elevations in a gate shaft that releases flows to Caples Creek, then the Silver Fork of the American River and ultimately to the South Fork American River.

The Caples Lake outlet works have been in continuous operation, without any known replacement or major repairs for more than 85 years. EID staff has experienced recent and increasing operational difficulties, including binding, strain accumulation, lurching, and leakage through closed slide gates, debris blockages of the trash rack, and faulty operation of the lower slide gate. In June 2008, EID conducted a dive inspection of the outlet works of Caples Lake dam, which revealed a number of structural problems. Based on the inspection, EID concluded that any attempt to operate the lower slide gate carried a substantial risk of gate failure and that repair work at the outlet gate