

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

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In the Matter of Water Quality Certification For  
**PLACER COUNTY WATER AGENCY**  
**INTERBAY RESERVOIR SEDIMENT REMOVAL PROJECT**

**FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION PROJECT NO. 2079**

SOURCES: Middle Fork of the American River

COUNTY: Placer County

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**WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION FOR FEDERAL PERMIT OR LICENSE**

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

1. Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) is proposing to remove up to approximately 70,000 cubic yards of accumulated storm sediment and debris from Interbay Reservoir on the Middle Fork of the American River, and to armor eroded areas of the reservoir banks. All work in the reservoir will be performed with the reservoir drained. Other maintenance tasks will also be performed at Interbay Dam, and Middle Fork Powerhouse, during the sediment removal operation.

Interbay Dam was completed in 1966, to divert water from the Middle Fork of the American River to Ralston Powerhouse on the Rubicon River. At the head of Interbay Reservoir is Middle Fork Powerhouse, which generates power using water from Hell Hole Reservoir.

Sediment removed from the reservoir will be stockpiled for future beneficial use at two storage sites on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land within 5½ miles of the reservoir.

Boulders and rocks from the reservoir will be used in armoring eroded areas of the powerhouse access road embankment bordering the reservoir. If additional rock is needed, it may be hauled from the USFS quarry site, or from the boulder stockpile at French Meadows Reservoir spillway. Alternatively, reinforced shotcrete may be used in lieu of the portions of the rock slope protection.

The primary purposes of the project are to:

- substantially restore full operating capacity to Interbay Reservoir
  - limit sediment and debris intrusion into the Ralston power tunnel, and therefore the Ralston Powerhouse turbine
  - create storage capacity in the reservoir to accommodate future sediment influx during storms
  - protect the road embankment along the reservoir from further erosion
  - perform miscellaneous maintenance work on Interbay Dam, the access road, and Middle Fork Powerhouse
2. Most of the sediment in Interbay Reservoir was deposited during the flood conditions of January 1997, when flows in the Middle Fork reached approximately 12,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). About 14,000 cubic yards of the 1997 storm sediment were removed just upstream of Interbay Dam in February, 1997, using a dragline crane under emergency conditions, to restore operation of the Ralston Powerhouse. This material was placed at a quarry site about 2.8 miles from Interbay Reservoir. A previous sediment removal operation was performed in 1988, following the floods of 1986, when 35,000 cubic yards of sediment were removed, and placed in an engineered fill site about 1 mile from Interbay Reservoir.

Based on a survey that was performed in the fall of 1999, a total of about 120,000 cubic yards of sediment exists in the reservoir, equivalent to about 75 acre-feet of sediment. The original gross storage of the reservoir was 175 acre-feet, including 44 acre-feet of dead storage.

Since Interbay Reservoir is relatively short and narrow, a large percentage of the fine silts in flood waters pass over the dam. Most of the sediment in Interbay Reservoir is anticipated to be sands, gravel, and cobbles, with larger rock and boulders at the upper end of the reservoir.

3. The Federal Clean Water Act (33 USC §1251, et seq.) was enacted "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters" (33USC §1251(a)). Section 101(g) (33 USC §1251(g)) requires federal agencies to "cooperate with state and local agencies to develop comprehensive solutions to prevent, reduce and eliminate pollution in concert with programs for managing water resources". Section 401 (33 USC §1341) requires every applicant for a federal license or permit to provide the responsible federal agency with certification that the project will be in compliance with specified provisions of the Clean Water Act, including section 303 ("Water Quality Standards and Implementation Plans", 33 USC §1313); directs the state agency responsible for certification to prescribe effluent limitations and other limitations necessary to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act and with any other appropriate requirement of state law; and provides that state certification conditions shall become conditions of any federal license or permit for the project.
4. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is the agency responsible for water quality certification in California (section 13160 of the California Water Code); and has delegated this function to the Executive Director by regulation (section 3838 of Title 23 of the California Code of Regulations).

5. On February 10, 1997, the SWRCB issued statewide water quality certification covering several classes of activities covered under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) 404 Nationwide Permits (NWP) and at the same time denied certification without prejudice to several classes of NWPs that were found to individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the environment. The NWP classes that were not certified by the SWRCB were found to result in more than minimal individual impacts or contribute to cumulative impacts as a result of the range of activities contemplated under those NWPs and therefore require certification on a project by project basis. PCWA has applied for a Section 404 NWP #33 (Temporary Construction, Access, and Dewatering) and NWP #13 (Bank Stabilization). Nation Wide Permits 13 and 33 are a class of activities for which the State requires water quality certification on an individual project basis.
6. The California Regional Water Quality Control Boards have adopted, and the SWRCB has approved, Water Quality Control Plans (Basin Plans) for each watershed basin in accordance with provisions of section 303 of the Clean Water Act, related to the establishment of water quality standards and planning (33 USC §§1313). Basin Plans identify beneficial uses of the waters within each Region.
7. The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region, (CVRWQCB) in its Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Valley Region, Sacramento River and San Joaquin River Basins has identified the beneficial uses of the Middle Fork of the American River from its source to Folsom Lake as: Municipal and Domestic Supply, Irrigation, Stock Watering, Hydropower Generation, Contact and Non-Contact Recreation, Canoeing and Rafting, Cold Freshwater Habitat, proposed Warm Freshwater Habitat, Cold Water Spawning and Wildlife Habitat.
8. Protection of the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of waters of the state for instream beneficial uses identified in the Basin Plans requires maintenance of adequate stream flows as well as effluent limitations and other limitation on discharges of pollutants from point and nonpoint sources to navigable waters and their tributaries.
9. Sediments from the reservoir were sampled in 1999, and tested for heavy metals, including mercury. Each sample was analyzed for Total Threshold Limit Concentration for CAM 17 metals, using EPA 6010. Samples were also analyzed for Mercury using EPA 7471, and for Acid Generating Potential, EPA 670. Test results showed levels consistent with natural background levels. No mercury was detected in any of the samples. Previous sampling of Interbay Reservoir sediments in 1988, and at Ralston Afterbay, downstream of Interbay Reservoir, in 1994, also showed no unacceptable concentrations.
10. As the state Lead Agency, PCWA prepared and circulated for public review a Negative Declaration pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). PCWA adopted the Negative Declaration on June 1, 2000. The SWRCB staff has reviewed the proposed project, the Negative Declaration and the conditions incorporated into the project by PCWA to protect the environment. The SWRCB acting as a Responsible Agency has prepared a Notice of Determination pursuant to CEQA for this project.

ACCORDINGLY, THE SWRCB CERTIFIES THAT THE PCWA INTERBAY RESERVOIR SEDIMENT REMOVAL PROJECT will comply with sections 301, 302, 303, 306 and 307 of the Clean Water Act, and with applicable provisions of state law provided PG&E complies with the following terms and conditions during the prosecution of the work certified herein.

1. Except for activities permitted by the Corps under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, soil, silt or other organic or earthen materials shall not be placed where such materials could pass into surface waters or surface water drainage courses. The use of aggregate base material and riprap shall be clean rock that is free from visible organic or earthen material.
2. In order to protect the beneficial use designations identified in the Basin Plan, the authorized sediment removal activities shall not add the following substances to surface waters:
  - a. Taste or odor-producing substances to impart undesirable tastes to domestic and municipal water supplies or odors to fish flesh or other edible products of aquatic origin or to cause nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses;
  - b. Perceptible floating material including, but not limited to, solids, liquids, foams or scums which could result in degradation of water quality;
  - c. Suspended or settleable material in concentrations that cause a nuisance or adversely affect beneficial uses;
  - d. Oil, greases, waxes or other materials in concentrations that result in a visible film or coating on the surface of the water or on objects in the water;
  - e. Toxic pollutants present in the water column, sediments, or biota in concentrations that adversely affect beneficial uses; that produce detrimental response in human, plant, animal, or aquatic life; or that bioaccumulate in aquatic resources at levels which are harmful to human health; and,
  - f. Coliform organisms attributable to human wastes.
3. If the Licensee initiates activities requiring installation of concrete, shotcrete, or grout, fresh concrete, shotcrete or grout that has not set shall not be allowed to contact or enter surface water.
4. All areas disturbed by project activities shall be protected from washout or erosion by the use of USFS "Best Management Practices".
5. The Licensee shall notify the SWRCB and the CVRWQCB immediately of any spill of petroleum products or other organic or earthen materials into waters of the Middle Fork of the American River.

6. This certification does not authorize any act which results in the taking of a threatened or endangered species or any act which is now prohibited, or becomes prohibited in the future, under either the California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code sections 2050 to 2097) or the federal Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C.A. sections 1531 to 1544). If a "take" will result from any act authorized under this certification, the Licensee shall obtain authorization for an incidental take prior to undertaking the proposed actions. Licensee shall be responsible for meeting all requirements of the applicable Endangered Species Act for the project authorized under this certification.
7. The Licensee shall take all reasonable measures to protect the beneficial uses of water of the Middle Fork of the American River. License shall maintain the minimum flow release below the Interbay Reservoir as identified in the FERC license for Project 2079.
8. Prior to initiation of the project, the Licensee shall obtain all necessary federal and state permits to carry out the project. All such permits that contain conditions to protect the beneficial uses of the Middle Fork of the American River are incorporated into this certification by reference.
9. The PCWA Construction Plan for the Interbay Reservoir Sediment Removal Project (as revised by PCWA 06-15-00 letter to the SWRCB) is incorporated in its entirety (Sections 1-3 and Appendices A-I as applicable) into this certification by reference.
10. This water quality certification is only for the PCWA project titled "Interbay Reservoir Sediment Removal Project". This water quality certification cannot be used for any other FERC or Corps action relative to FERC License No. 2079. This certification does not constitute the water quality approval necessary for the issuance of a new FERC license for Project No. 2079.



Edward Anton  
Executive Director

Date: 8/10/00