State Water Resources Control Board

APR 01 2014

Ms. Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20426

Dear Secretary Bose:

RESPONSE TO YUBA COUNTY WATER AGENCY UPDATED STUDY REPORT
RESPONSES AND COMMENTS ON YUBA RIVER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT; FEDERAL
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION (FERC) PROJECT NO. 2248; YUBA COUNTY

On March 3, 2014, Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA) submitted to FERC responses to
comments filed by relicensing participants during the Updated Study Report comment period. In
YCWA’s letter, Section 2.2.7 Fish Passage Assessment for Spring-run Chinook Salmon and
Central Valley Steelhead, YCWA discussed the State Water Resources Control Board’s (State
Water Board or SWRCB) Fish Passage Assessment Study Request (Study Request) made in
the State Water Board’s January 30, 2014, comment letter.

Section 2.2.7.3 of YCWA’s response letter recommended that FERC deny the State Water
Board’s Study Request. State Water Board staff would like to provide clarification to FERC on
three statements YCWA made in its March 3, 2014, comment letter:

1. Section 2.2.7.2.7 Other Showings of Good Cause states, “The SWRCB contends that
there is a nexus between water quality certification and anadromous fish upstream of
Englebright Dam. However, the Basin Plan does not include migratory anadromous
salmonids as a Designated Beneficial Use, either existing or potential, in the Yuba River
Basin upstream of Englebright Dam.”

Page II-6.00 of The Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento River and San
Joaquin River Basins (Basin Plan) lists “cold water spawning” for salmon and steelhead
as a beneficial use in the Yuba River above Englebright Reservoir. (See id. p. II-6,
line 41 & Note 4.) Thus, a spawning beneficial use designation exists for salmon and
steelhead in the upper Yuba River watershed above Englebright Reservoir. Additionally,
the Basin Plan has postponed identification of surface waters having the potential to
support rare, threatened or endangered species beneficial use1 (Id. pp. II-2.00; II-5,
Note.)

1 Surface waters with the beneficial uses of Groundwater Recharge (GWR), Freshwater Replenishment
(FRSH), and Preservation of Rare and Endangered Species have not been identified in this plan [Basin
Plan]. Surface waters of the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins falling within these beneficial use
categories will be identified in the future as part of the continuous planning process to be conducted by
the State Water Resources Control Board. (Basin Plan 11-5, Note)

FELICIA MARCUS, CHAIR | THOMAS HOWARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 | Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 | www.waterboards.ca.gov

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State Water Board staff would also like to note that the State Water Board’s review for water quality certification is not limited to beneficial uses and water quality objectives identified in the basin planning process. Water quality certification may include conditions necessary to satisfy any appropriate requirements of state law (see 33 U.S.C. 1341 (d)), and the State Water Board considers a range of other water quality-related requirements in its water quality certification process, including the application of the public trust doctrine and the California Constitution’s requirements for reasonable use and reasonable methods of use and diversion. (National Audubon Society v. Superior Court (1983) 33 Cal.3d 419; Cal. Const., art. X, § 2.) Therefore, while the Basin Plan here does, in fact, identify the beneficial use of waters upstream of Englebright as spawning habitat for steelhead and salmon, this determination is not the only relevant source of the State Water Board’s authority in seeking additional information.

2. Section 2.2.7.2.1 Criterion 1 – Material Changes in Laws and Regulations YCWA states, “The SWRCB did not base its request on material changes in applicable law and regulations, or the implementation of those laws and regulations.”

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 18, Section 5.19(e) states:

“Any proposal for new information gathering or studies pursuant to paragraphs 9(c)(1)-(4) of this section must be accompanied by a showing of good cause why the proposal should be approved, and must include, as appropriate to the facts of the case, a statement explaining:

1. Any material changes in the law or regulations applicable to the information request…”

State Water Board staff’s Study Request addressed CFR Title 18, Section 5.19(e) “as appropriate to the facts of the case.” The CFR does not specify that a study request must be based on material changes in applicable law and regulations, or the implementation of those laws and regulations, rather, by requiring discussion of “any” such changes, it provides for inclusion of this information when appropriate. Here, the request is not based on a change in law or regulations. The request is based on a change in circumstances and available information, and on the State Water Board’s information needs in complying with the California Environmental Quality Act and in evaluating the water quality certification application for the Project, once received. As noted in the State Water Board’s January 30, 2014, Updated Study Report Comment Letter, documents developed as part of the Yuba Salmon Forum’s effort (Fish Passage Infrastructure Report and Draft Summary Habitat Analysis) provide significant new information that became available after the Initial Study Report comment period. See the State Water Board’s January 30 letter for additional information.

3. Section 2.2.7.2.3 Criterion 3 – Why Request Was Not Made Earlier YCWA states, “The SWRCB has not provided any additional information regarding Project nexus.” The Project nexus information in the Study Request satisfies the FERC criteria listed in CFR, Title 18, Section 5.9(b). State Water Board staff refers FERC staff to the State Water Board’s January 30, 2014, Updated Study Report Comment Letter, Appendix A, for additional information on staff’s determination of Project nexus.
If you have questions related to this letter, please contact me at 916-341-5321 or through email at parker.thaler@waterboards.ca.gov. Written correspondence should be addressed as follows:

State Water Resources Control Board  
Division of Water Rights  
Water Quality Certification Program  
Attn: Parker Thaler  
P.O. Box 2000  
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Parker Thaler  
Environmental Scientist  
Water Quality Certification Program

cc: Mr. Jane Diamond, Director  
U.S. EPA, Region 9  
Water Division  
75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Ms. Alison Willy  
Senior Fish and Wildlife Biologist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-2605  
Sacramento, CA 95825

Ms. Elizabeth Lee  
Senior Water Resource Control Engineer  
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Water Quality Certification/Municipal Storm Water  
11010 Sun Center Drive, Suite 200  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6114

Mr. Adam Laputz  
Supervising Water Resource Control Engineer  
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board  
11020 Sun Center D, Suite 200  
Rancho Cordova, Ca 95670

cc: Continues on next page.
cc: Ms. MaryLisa Lynch  
Water Program Supervisor  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
1701 Nimbus Road, Suite A  
Rancho Cordova, CA  95670

Mr. Larry Thompson  
Fishery Biologist, NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
650 Capitol Mall, Rm 5100  
Sacramento, CA  95814

Mr. Curt Aikens  
General Manager, Yuba County Water Agency  
1220 F Street  
Marysville, CA  95901

Ms. Amy Lind  
Hydroelectric Coordinator  
Tahoe Plumas National Forests  
631 Coyote Street  
Nevada City, CA  95959