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POTTER VALLEY HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT
SURRENDER AND DECOMMISSIONING

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

HELD ON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025

6:02 P.M.

RIVER LODGE CONFERENCE CENTER

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FORTUNA, CALIFORNIA 95540

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1 APPEARANCES

2 ON BEHALF OF CALIFORNIA WATER BOARDS:

3 Nathan Fisch, Senior Environmental Scientist

4 Wilhelmina Chon, Environmental Scientist, Project
5 Manager

6 Erin Ragazzi, Assistant Deputy Director

7 Parker Thaler, Project Manager

8 Dana Heinrich, Esquire, Office of Chief Counsel

9 Shannon Luoma, Regulatory Section Manager,

10 Kleinschmidt Associates

11 Carissa Shoemaker, Licensing Coordinator,

12 Kleinschmidt Associates

13
14 PUBLIC COMMENTERS:

15 Marisa McGrew

16 Natalie Arroyo

17 Soctt Gracean

18 Ren Brownell

19 Regina Chichizola

20 Darren Mierau

21 Launa Wyrđ

22 Eric Stockwell

23 Vivian Helliwell

24 Stephen Rosenberg

25 Cena Marino

1 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

2 HELD ON

3 TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025

4 6:02 P.M.

5
6 MR. FISCH: Good evening everyone, and
7 thank you for being here.

8 My name is Nathan Fisch, and I work for
9 the California State Water Resources Control Board
10 in the Division of Water Rights.

11 So this is one of four public scoping
12 meetings in response to a notice of preparation of
13 an environmental impact for the Pottery Valley
14 Hydroelectric Project.

15 Please note today's meeting is being
16 transcribed by our court reporter, Spencer, right
17 here, and the transcript will be posted on our
18 website in the coming weeks.

19 So let me introduce the team we have
20 today.

21 So to my right is Wilhelmina Chon, our
22 Environmental Scientist and Project Manager for the
23 Pottery Valley Project.

24 To her right is Dana Heinrich in the
25 Office of Chief Counsel.

1 And then to her right is Erin Ragazzi, one
2 of our Assistant Deputy Directors.

3 And to my left is our Environmental
4 Program Manager, Parker Thaler.

5 Next slide.

6 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is your microphone on?

7 MR. FISCH: Yeah. Can you guys not --

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I can't hear very well
9 as it is, but --

10 MR. FISCH: Okay. Can you guys hear me in
11 the back? Okay.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can you hear him?

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Barely.

14 MR. FISCH: Barely? Okay.

15 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Try this again.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Eat the mic.

17 MR. FISCH: Okay. Is that better? No?
18 It is on.

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can you hear me?

20 MR. FISCH: Hello. Hello. It was just
21 working.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Better.

23 MR. FISCH: Okay. Sorry about that.

24 All right. So --

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: You want to introduce

1 folks again?

2 MR. FISCH: Yeah. Let me roll it back.

3 So my name is Nathan Fisch. I'm a Senior
4 Environmental Scientist at the State Water Resources
5 Control Board.

6 To my right is Wilhelmina Chon, an
7 Environmental Scientist and Project Manager for the
8 Pottery Valley Project.

9 To her right is Dana Heinrich, in the
10 Office of Chief Counsel.

11 And to her right is Erin Ragazzi, one of
12 our Assistant Deputy Directors in the Division of
13 Water Rights. And to my left is Parker Thaler, our
14 Environmental Program Manager.

15 Okay. So what's the plan for today? So
16 in a few minutes, we're going to provide some
17 background on the State Water Board and our role
18 here. Then we'll provide some background on water
19 quality certifications and how that fits in the
20 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission process.

21 Then we'll provide a brief overview of the
22 California Environmental Quality Act process and how
23 the public can stay involved. And then we'll walk
24 through an overview of the Pottery Valley
25 Hydroelectric Project and PG&E Surrender

1 application. And then next, we'll follow up with
2 how to stay informed in the State Water Board
3 process and then open the floor for verbal comments.

4 So before we get into some meeting
5 logistics, when you came through the doors, the
6 hallway splits. Women's bathroom is over here
7 (indicating). Men's bathroom is over there
8 (indicating). And there's water fountains on both
9 ends.

10 In the event of emergency, we have exit
11 doors over here (indicating). Please proceed out of
12 those and around the building, and once we get the
13 all clear, we'll come back in and reconvene the
14 meeting.

15 A couple more meeting logistics. Please
16 silence all devices here. Please respect all
17 viewers' points of view. Everyone's taking time out
18 of their day to be here today. And please speak one
19 at a time. And when it's your turn, please
20 introduce yourself and spell your name for the court
21 reporter so we understand who's talking.

22 If anyone is having any issues with
23 viewing the presentation, please flag one of us
24 down. We have some printed copies so you can follow
25 along at your seats.

1 And then, lastly, please save all comments
2 until the public comment portion of the presentation
3 at the end.

4 So with that, I will hand it over to
5 Wilhelmina.

6 MS. CHON: Thank you. So hello. My name
7 is Wilhelmina Chon.

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: We can barely hear you.
9 Can you speak up?

10 MS. CHON: Hello. Can you hear me?

11 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Speak louder.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: A little louder.

14 MS. CHON: Hello. My name is Wilhelmina
15 Chon, and I'm an environmental scientist in the
16 Division of Water Rights and project manager for the
17 Potter Valley Project.

18 So why is the State Water Board involved?
19 The State Water Board has authority over water
20 rights and water quality in California. Our mission
21 is to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of
22 California's water resources, as well as protect and
23 allocate water for many beneficial uses.

24 We are here today because Section 401 of
25 the Clean Water Act requires that any applicant

1 seeking a federal license or permit where the
2 proposed activity may result in a discharge to
3 surface water, is required to obtain a water quality
4 certification from the State Water Board. The State
5 Water Board conditions hydroelectric projects via
6 water quality certifications to ensure the
7 protection of the state's waters.

8 Now I'd like to go over water quality
9 certifications and how it's related to the federal
10 license surrender order.

11 Water quality certifications focus on
12 protecting water quality and beneficial uses of
13 water while considering water and existing water
14 rights.

15 If a water quality certification is
16 issued, the conditions in it become a mandatory part
17 of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission or part
18 of the license surrender order for the project.

19 Water quality certifications ensure that a
20 project will comply with water quality objectives
21 and beneficial uses as outlined in the regional
22 water quality control plan, also known as Basin
23 Plans.

24 In this case, the North Coast Regional
25 Water Quality Control Plans as adopted by the North

1 Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

2 PG&E plans to apply for a water quality
3 certification for their proposed project. The State
4 Water Board is non-positional and will act on the
5 application for water quality certification that we
6 anticipate receiving.

7 However, before the State Water Board can
8 issue a water quality certification, it must first
9 comply with the California Environmental Quality
10 Act, which I'll go over later.

11 In addition, the North Coast Regional
12 Water Quality Control Board adopted the policy in
13 support of restoration in the North Coast Region on
14 January 29th, 2015. The restoration policy states
15 that the Boards may permit or certify restoration
16 projects that result in significant and sometimes
17 unavoidable impacts if it is shown that the project
18 will result in long-term protection of beneficial
19 uses and water quality.

20 Under the restoration policy, temporary
21 exceedances in turbidity, temperature, or other
22 water quality objectives in project-affected water
23 bodies can be authorized as long as it is shown that
24 the project will result in long-term protection of
25 beneficial uses and water quality objectives.

1 So -- and that leads us to the California
2 Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA.

3 CEQA informs the State Water Board and the
4 public about the proposed project's significant
5 environmental effects and ways to reduce those
6 impacts.

7 Since PG&E is not a public agency, the
8 State Water Board will be the lead agency for CEQA
9 and will prepare the CEQA document.

10 In this case, the State Water Board will
11 be preparing the type of CEQA document called an
12 Environmental Impact Report, or EIR for short. The
13 CEQA document will be used to support the conditions
14 in the water quality certification for the proposed
15 project. Generally the State Water Board will not
16 issue a water quality certification without
17 completing the CEQA.

18 So the purpose of CEQA scoping is to
19 identify potentially significant environmental
20 impacts associated with the proposed project.
21 Comments received during the scoping meetings help
22 determine the scope of environmental review, as well
23 as identify potential project alternatives and
24 mitigation measures for potentially significant
25 impacts that may arise on the project.

1 This flowchart provides a high-level
2 overview of the State Water Board's CEQA process.
3 After an Environmental Impact Report is deemed
4 necessary, the State Water Board conducts scoping
5 meetings, such as this one, to solicit public input
6 to help in the development of the report. When
7 ready, a draft Environmental Impact Report will be
8 released for public comment for a minimum of 45
9 days.

10 After the public comment period concludes,
11 the State Water Board will then review and respond
12 to any public input that was received.

13 Lastly, the State Water Board will then
14 issue a final EIR for the project.

15 Next I will provide a brief overview of
16 the Potter Valley Project.

17 So the Potter Valley Project is owned and
18 operated by PG&E and is located on the Eel and East
19 Branch Russian River in Lake and Mendocino Counties.
20 The nearest city is Ukiah, which is approximately 15
21 miles southwest of the Potter Valley Powerhouse.

22 This is an existing project which is
23 comprised of Scott Dam, Lake Pillsbury, Potter
24 Valley Powerhouse, Cape Horn Dam, Van Arsdale
25 Reservoir, and several recreation areas. Water from

1 the Eel River is diverted from Cape Horn Dam and is
2 discharged into the East Branch of the Russian
3 River.

4 Prior to 2022, PG&E looked for a new owner
5 for the project, but was unable to find one. In May
6 and June of 2022, PG&E, at the request of FERC,
7 filed an initial plan and schedule to submit a
8 Surrender and Decommissioning Plan.

9 PG&E submitted their final Surrender
10 application to FERC in July 2025 and intends to
11 apply for water quality certification.

12 Again, reiterating that the State Water
13 Board is non-positional and will act on the
14 application for water quality certification that we
15 anticipate receiving.

16 Today's meeting is meant to solicit public
17 input that can inform the development of the State
18 Water Board's CEQA documents.

19 Now I will provide an overview of the
20 Potter Valley License Surrender and Decommissioning
21 Project.

22 As art of the proposed project, PG&E is
23 requesting to surrender and decommission the Potter
24 Valley Hydroelectric Project with the Federal Energy
25 Regulatory Commission. The proposed project

1 involves removal of Scott and Cape Horn Dam and
2 associated facilities followed by restoration of the
3 former lake areas.

4 In addition, PG&E is proposing to leave
5 the diversion facilities in place for future
6 diversions by a different party. I'll cover that in
7 a later slide.

8 Recreational facilities will either be
9 removed, restored, or transferred to another party.

10 Finally, the project includes 41 proposed
11 plans and measures, some of which have been
12 developed or are to be developed, and those will be
13 shown on the next slide.

14 PG&E has proposed the following 41 plans
15 and measures as part of their surrender and
16 decommissioning plan. I'm not going over each plan
17 and measure in detail today; however, if you'd like
18 more information, please see the Notice of
19 Preparation that was issued on September 22nd, 2025.
20 The Notice of Preparation is available on our Potter
21 Valley webpage. The web address will be shown at
22 the end of the presentation.

23 So CEQA helps us to identify which
24 potentially significant impacts the project may
25 have. The State Water Board expects that a number

1 of potentially significant impacts may occur as a
2 result of the proposed project. The resources on
3 the slide are a part of a preliminary and non-
4 exhaustive list that would be potentially
5 significantly impacted by the project.

6 So please note there is a concurrent
7 project that is separate from PG&E's surrender and
8 decommissioning project. That project is called the
9 New Eel Russian Facility, or NERF. And if you'd
10 like more information, please contact the Eel
11 Russian Project Authority, or ERPA, at the contact
12 information provided on the slide.

13 MR. FISCH: Thanks, Wilhelmina.

14 Now I'd like to discuss some options to
15 provide comments. So if you haven't already grabbed
16 a comment -- or a speaker card, please grab one at
17 the entrance.

18 On that speaker card, you can indicate
19 whether you would like to speak or provide written
20 comments. After you fill out the card, please hand
21 it to one of the State Water Board staff.

22 Since we expect multiple people to give
23 comments, we ask that you please keep your comments
24 to the allotted time. We'll let you know how many
25 -- how long that is, once we get there.

1 And then, lastly, I'd like to remind
2 everyone that we're accepting written comments until
3 November 3rd. We have a slide at the end with how
4 you can submit those written comments. Those
5 comments carry the same weight as any written or
6 oral comments provided tonight.

7 So back to you, Wilhelmina.

8 MS. CHON: Thank you, Nathan.

9 So the State Water Board is seeking
10 comments on the project alternatives, potentially
11 significant impacts, mitigation measures, and
12 anything related to the project to help us in the
13 development of our Environmental Impact Report.

14 We plan to evaluate PG&E's proposed
15 project and a range of alternatives, and any input
16 on specific project alternatives would be helpful.
17 Other comments regarding potential impacts of the
18 project and potential mitigation measures to lessen
19 those impacts would be helpful as well.

20 All public comments submitted by November
21 3rd, 2025, will be considered. After the draft
22 Environmental Impact Report is released, there will
23 be another public review and comment period to
24 solicit input on that document.

25 So this slide provides ways to stay

1 informed and up to date with the project. The State
2 Water Board will continue to update the Potter
3 Valley webpage with information and filings
4 regarding the CEQA and Water Quality Certification
5 process. The site URL for the Potter Valley
6 Hydroelectric Project is shown on the current slide.

7 On the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
8 webpage, you can find the Notice of Preparation that
9 we issued on September 22nd, 2025. The Notice of
10 Preparation has information on how to subscribe to
11 our online notification system called GovDelivery.
12 If you sign up, GovDelivery will send you emails
13 related to the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project
14 and other projects pursuing certifications managed
15 by the Division of Water Rights.

16 As a reminder, we are accepting written
17 comments until 4:00 p.m. on November 3rd, 2025,
18 regarding the range of alternatives, potential
19 significant effects, and mitigation measures that
20 should be analyzed in the Environmental Impact
21 Report. Directions on how to submit comments by
22 email or hard copy are shown on the slide right now.

23 Thank you for your attention.

24 So before we open the floor to public
25 comments, I would like to go over some reminders.

1 Please use the microphone to speak, and
2 one speaker at a time.

3 Please be sure to speak and spell your
4 name out for the court reporter before providing
5 your comments. And then please stick to your
6 allotted time and respect all speakers' points of
7 view. You are also welcome to provide written
8 comments if you do not wish to speak today.

9 MS. RAGAZZI: Okay. Can people hear me on
10 this?

11 AUDIENCE MEMBER: No.

12 MS. RAGAZZI: No. How about now?

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. If you talk louder.

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: It sounds like it's not
15 working.

16 MS. RAGAZZI: Is this one working better?

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah.

18 MS. RAGAZZI: Okay. So this just
19 demonstrates the importance of everybody speaking
20 into the microphone, especially because we want the
21 court reporter to be able to capture what you're
22 saying tonight.

23 So when I call your name, if you could
24 state your name and then spell it for the court
25 reporter, that would be greatly appreciated.

1 I'm going to ask people to limit their
2 comments to five minutes to start, and then you can
3 go back through if you feel like you need additional
4 time to make additional comments.

5 And first up I have Marisa McGrew. Again,
6 if you can state your name and spell it for the
7 court reporter.

8 MS. MCGREW: So Marisa McGrew, M-a-r-i-s-
9 a. And McGrew is M-c-G-r-e-w.

10 So my name is Marisa. I work as a
11 fisheries biologist and the assistant natural
12 resources director for the Wiyot Tribes Natural
13 Resources Department. But I am not speaking on
14 behalf of the tribe, but rather from a fisheries
15 perspective in my employee role.

16 The Wiyot Tribe's ancestral territory
17 stands at the lower end of the river, including the
18 estuary and the main stem, almost up to the
19 southward point of the confluence. The Wiyot Tribe
20 also shares its name with the River Wiyot.

21 I'm voicing my support for the immediate
22 decommissioning and removal of Scott Dam and Cape
23 Horn Dam.

24 Section 401 is in place to ensure clean
25 waters for species recovery and restore tribal

1 fisheries and urging the State Water Board to review
2 the water quality certification for the Potter
3 Valley Project as a water and restoration tool
4 rather than just a construction permit.

5 Short-term impacts are expected and should
6 come as no surprise after having two thick concrete
7 barriers blocking the river currents from reaching
8 the Westwind Basin. Therefore, the long-term
9 impacts of the dam removal will result as a net
10 positive.

11 The long-term impacts of having the dam
12 remain in place is far worse than the short-term
13 impacts that will be seen with dam removal.

14 With that being said, the short-term
15 impacts of dam removal must be carefully analyzed
16 and monitored and, if possible, minimized and
17 mitigated. Sediment has been building for over 100
18 years, and we need to better understand the
19 conditions necessary to transport the sediment
20 downstream by the timeless release of sediment to
21 minimize impacts for aquatic life and what
22 additional mitigation measures like native root
23 vegetation can do to limit erosion.

24 We have an extraordinary opportunity to
25 learn from other rivers such as the Klamath, the

1 White Salmon, the Elwha, who have led the way in
2 what it takes to effectively manage the risks while
3 safely removing the dams. The longer these dams
4 remain in place, the more the river will suffer, so
5 I ask that the State Water Board complete this
6 process quickly and thoughtfully.

7 MS. RAGAZZI: Thank you.

8 And I have Natalie Arroyo. And, Natalie,
9 I'm going to ask one additional thing. If you can
10 speak slowly, that would be awesome.

11 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I couldn't hear the last
12 speaker. I couldn't hear a word.

13 MS. RAGAZZI: Okay. So we are
14 transcribing it --

15 AUDIENCE MEMBER: All right.

16 MS. RAGAZZI: -- all public comments made.

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: It might be better if
18 they come up here.

19 MS. RAGAZZI: Are you okay coming up here?

20 MS. ARROYO: Happy to.

21 MS. RAGAZZI: Okay.

22 MS. ARROYO: I'm Natalie Arroyo, N-a-t-a-
23 l-i-e, A-r-r-o-y-o. I'm a county supervisor here in
24 Humboldt County, representing the 4th District. I
25 also serve as a gubernatorial appointee of Governor

1 Newsom to the Board of the Klamath River Renewal
2 Corporation, which is the organization that, as you
3 all know, took out the four dams on the Klamath.
4 I'm not speaking on behalf of the KRRC today, but
5 that helps inform my experience with dam removal.

6 And I want to thank you for meeting in the
7 Eel River Watershed. Thank you so much for meeting
8 here today. And I really do support this project,
9 as does our Board. We have worked closely with our
10 partners in neighboring counties, with the Round
11 Valley Tribes, on an agreement to move forward with
12 the project. And I know that you're evaluating the
13 impacts of the dam removal proposal separate from
14 the NERF. But, you know, we are supportive of the
15 approach that you've agreed upon with our partners
16 to both those projects.

17 I do want to, you know, emphasize that the
18 fisheries resources are so important in the Eel
19 River. The third largest watershed in California
20 opened, you know, an incredible wealth of fisheries
21 resources, both salmonid species and lamprey and
22 other species.

23 And, of course, the river does have water
24 quality issues every year from overgrowth of algae
25 and temperature and other impacts.

1 And then recreation is also really
2 critically important to us in the whole county. So
3 those are just a few of the reasons why I support
4 the project moving forward in an expedited way.

5 But I also know that we need to do a
6 thorough process, so I don't have any particular
7 comments about areas to explore for scoping that
8 might not be on your radar. But I want to encourage
9 a concerted and expedited effort to move forward
10 with this.

11 One thing that I can say I learned from
12 the Klamath experience is that Federal Energy
13 Regulatory Commission can sort of slow-roll the
14 process and has a lot of decision-making authority
15 with when and how to schedule a hearing. And so the
16 more prepared the state can be to move forward with
17 the proposal that, you know, so many communities are
18 in support of, I think that's beneficial.

19 And, again, thank you for being here. I
20 just want to voice my enormous support for dam
21 removal of the Eel. Thank you.

22 MS. RAGGAZI: Thank you.

23 Okay. Next up on that list is Scott
24 Greacen. Are you okay coming up here, Scott?

25 MR. GREACEN: Sure.

1 MS. RAGAZZI: Okay. You can go later if
2 you want.

3 MR. GREACEN: My name is Scott Greacen.
4 First name is S-c-o-t-t. Last name, G-r-e-a-c-e-n.

5 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Closer, closer, closer.

6 MR. GREACEN: I'm the Conservation
7 Director for Friends of the Eel River.

8 Now see, that makes it echo.

9 MS. RAGAZZI: It's good.

10 MR. GREACEN: Good? Okay.

11 When Cape Horn Dam was built on the Upper
12 Eel River in 1908, plate tectonics was a crackpot
13 theory. The native people of the Eel River could
14 not in 1908 do as the dam builder did, claim the
15 legal right under California law to divert 300 CFS,
16 cubic feet per second, from the Eel to the East
17 Branch of the Russian every minute of every day
18 forever. That inter-basin diversion could never be
19 considered today, let alone approved, has been the
20 basis of the project's operations for the last
21 century.

22 When Cape Horn Dam's reservoir filled with
23 rock in only a few years, dam builders turned to
24 another site a dozen miles up where they built Scott
25 Dam in 1922 to provide a more reliable water supply

1 with the Cape Horn Dam diversion.

2 The problems we face today, to which the
3 State Board is finally turning its attention, are
4 all downstream of those choices to issue that water
5 right and to build those dams.

6 Restoring the Eel and doing so with even a
7 very limited measure of justice requires a
8 recognition that dam removal is the inevitable
9 consequence of dam construction. Assessing the
10 impacts of dam removal requires an understanding of
11 the impacts of dam construction and operation in the
12 last century, which have been dire for the Eel River
13 and its fisheries.

14 Even in the last decade, there's been a
15 series of threats to the remaining fisheries of the
16 Eel River, especially steelhead, because of very
17 high water temperatures caused by project operations
18 in the summer. This summer was no exception.

19 In this context, the State Water Board's
20 water quality analysis should focus most of its
21 limited bandwidth on the need to restore pre-dam
22 functions in the post-dam removal era ahead. The
23 measure of success for dam removal in water quality
24 terms is, thus, not the unavoidable short-term
25 impacts of dam removal, but the means by and extent

1 to which those inevitable impacts can be limited in
2 scope, but especially duration.

3 As on the Klamath, the timing of sediment
4 releases is likely to be critical to keeping Eel
5 River's fisheries intact and providing for their
6 recovery. And in this respect, we can only apply
7 your application of the restoration policy to this
8 situation. There couldn't be a more appropriate
9 application, I think.

10 The Russian River water users who
11 benefitted from Eel River subsidies to their water
12 supplies would prefer your analysis to assume that
13 obsolete, let me say, diversion rates reflected in
14 the current license in the -- the rate schedule
15 that's in the current license.

16 But PG&E has been unable to implement
17 those flows over the last 20 years. Only in a few
18 years have they met those flows without an annual
19 variance. And now with the radial gates down for
20 safety reasons, it's basically impossible for the
21 project's dams to be operated in a way that's safe
22 for the project, for the fish, and for humans
23 downstream without an annual variance. That is to
24 say, the rules don't apply anymore.

25 So when you look at what the Russian River

1 is getting, it should be based on what they've been
2 getting in the last, you know, five, ten years, not
3 the theoretical, you know, they could get under the
4 rules that don't work. So that's really the main
5 point. We need these dams down quickly, and the
6 impacts are going to be quite serious. But as of
7 right now, if they can, it should be managed. Thank
8 you.

9 MS. RAGAZZI: Thank you.

10 And the next speaker I have here is -- I
11 think it's Ren Brownell.

12 MS. BROWNELL: Brownell.

13 Hello. Is this close enough?

14 MS. RAGAZZI: You're fine.

15 MS. BROWNELL: Good evening, everybody.

16 My name is Ren Brownell. R-e-n, B-r-o-w-n-e-l-l.
17 And I live on the Klamath River, and I was formerly
18 the public information officer for the Klamath Dam
19 Removal Project, though I'm no longer in that
20 position anymore. I'm currently a Humboldt County
21 resident.

22 I was very, very fortunate to have a
23 front-row seat to the largest dam removal in history
24 until this point, and I've witnessed some really
25 incredible things, but I will also be frank in

1 saying that it was the hardest thing that I've ever
2 done.

3 I'm sure most people in this room have
4 heard this one before, that dam removal is very akin
5 to performing a surgery on a river. Surgeries are
6 intense and include some very serious short-term
7 impacts, but we endure them for the long-term
8 benefits. Sedimentation is the short-term negative
9 impact. Dam removals in the drawdown period of the
10 Klamath Dam Removal was incredibly challenging. I
11 watched very personally as the dissolved oxygen
12 trashed the river. And even though it was timed to
13 take place during the time that there were no salmon
14 migrating in the river, I was worried for the other
15 creatures in the river.

16 I witnessed the impacts firsthand as this
17 great river that passed by my home turbulent with
18 sediment, and through it all, still I had trust in
19 the tribal agency scientists that assured me that
20 the short-term pain would be worth the long-term
21 gains, and that proved to be true.

22 So following drawdown, water quality
23 quickly rebounded even while dam removal was still
24 taking place. And just last week, we had some data
25 in from the Karuk tribe to show what we saw, a DO

1 crash during the anticipated periods. Overall the
2 dissolved oxygen was better in the river during the
3 period of last year while the dam removal was still
4 taking place.

5 And now here we are, one year since the
6 removal of the dams, and those long-term gains are
7 even more evident. The waters have cleared.
8 There's not the same turbidity we saw during the
9 removal. And everybody who lives on the river can
10 attest to the cooler waters and lack of algae, and
11 there's lots of data to support that, as well.

12 Last year salmon made it past the former
13 dam sites, and if you guys haven't heard, they made
14 it all the way up into the Williamson and Sprague
15 Rivers up past Upper Klamath Lake as well, so
16 certainly evidence that salmon will take advantage
17 of the newly available habitat to them.

18 So all to say that I'm here to attest to
19 the short-term gain is, in fact, worth the long-term
20 gain. And my experience gives me a keen
21 understanding of the harm that dams can do to a
22 river and how beneficial it is for both river and
23 community health to remove obsolete infrastructure
24 from our waterways.

25 The immediate success that we have seen on

1 the Klamath River is in part due to the state's
2 comprehensive and thoughtful 401 certification.

3 And now we have an opportunity to do the
4 same with the Eel River and its imperiled salmon
5 population.

6 I encourage the Board to apply the same
7 restoration policy and apply it to the Klamath and
8 view this process as a watershed restoration tool.
9 And I also encourage you to employ strategies to
10 prevent harm to cultural resources, in time draw
11 down to limit the impacts on fisheries in the river.

12 The Eel River is a different drainage
13 which will need its own analysis and strategies for
14 harm reduction, and I encourage the Board to be
15 comprehensive and to mitigate impacts wherever
16 possible. Thank you.

17 MS. RAGAZZA: Thank you.

18 Regina.

19 MS. CHICHIZOLA: Hello. I'm Regina
20 Chichizola, R-e-g-i-n-a, C-h-i-c-h-i, again, -z-o-
21 la.

22 I know many of you from the Klamath 401
23 certification processes, which took a very long
24 time. And I think we'll find on the Eel River, that
25 the issues are slightly more simple, even though

1 there is a diversion involved where there's less
2 dams, and it's very clear that these dams need to
3 go, and they've been in place way too long.

4 I think as we look at this process, like
5 people said before, we do need to look at the
6 restoration policy, and look at the fact that we
7 need more water in the river, and that the way that
8 the dams come down will make a really big
9 difference.

10 I think the way that the Klamath dams came
11 down, as a resident of the Klamath River, was
12 amazing. It was really great to see them come down
13 in a time that the salmon were not present and in a
14 way that the sediment was able to be deposited as
15 quickly as possible because of the winter rains. I
16 would love to see a similar plan put in place.

17 And I just would like to echo that it's
18 been only a year since the Klamath dams came down,
19 and I've watched all summer long as river guides and
20 fishermen and children and kayakers are once again
21 able to actually be in the river. I've lived there
22 for 25 years, and there's never been a point before
23 where we felt comfortable in the river or maybe we
24 felt like river was clean enough to touch during the
25 end of the summer. The toxic algae is virtually

1 gone.

2 The river is cold when we look at it.
3 People say, "Hey, this looks like Big Eel River in
4 the springtime before the flows get low" because the
5 water is blue again and the salmon are upriver
6 again.

7 And I do think the 401 certification
8 process is something you should be proud of because
9 it had a lot to do with why the river did heal so
10 quickly.

11 I'm happy you're starting this process now
12 because, as we know, 401 certifications can take a
13 long time, and the Eel River's been suffering way
14 too long. It's been a really long time since people
15 have been able to be in the river at the end of the
16 summer without there being algae issues. It's been
17 a very long time since our fishermen in Humboldt
18 County have been able to work and actually get a
19 harvestable amount of salmon. And by taking these
20 dams down, we can see the restoration happen that
21 this county needs.

22 As we know, the county is not economically
23 in good shape a lot of the time, but our fishermen
24 really help add bounty to the county, and I really
25 hope that we can see this happen in a quick and

1 healthy way.

2 I wanted to say, also, that I think it's
3 really important when you assess whether unpowered
4 water in the Russian River is going to be impacted.
5 Think about the fact that right now the East Branch
6 Russian River looks like it has much more water in
7 it than the Eel River a lot of the times because
8 it's Eel River water that used to not be a year-
9 round stream. And so we can't look at -- and it's
10 not an area that salmon can get to.

11 So we can't look at impacts to be like,
12 oh, well the East Branch Russian River is not going
13 to have as much water in it. We have to look at it
14 as that's Eel River water, and it needs to be back
15 in the Eel River so we can actually once again have
16 a healthy river that people can swim in and drink
17 out of without being scared the way that we now can
18 on the Klamath River.

19 With that being said, I just want to thank
20 you for having a hearing here in Fortuna. I know
21 that wasn't originally planned, but when we asked
22 for it, you did do it.

23 I ask that next time you come to Humboldt
24 County, that you give us a little more notice
25 because people really do care about the Eel River,

1 but a lot of people didn't know about the hearing
2 because it wasn't a lot of time for us to let people
3 know. And I think you'll find that once there's a
4 plan out, a lot more people will come out and
5 they'll have really good suggestions because this
6 community knows what the river needs, and they know
7 how to make sure that the impacts will be as light
8 as possible.

9 It's like I think Ren said, it's kind of
10 like surgery, but it's a little like you're ripping
11 off a band-aid. You know, the healing is going to
12 happen quickly if you let it, but let's make sure
13 that we mitigate impacts and keep them short-term so
14 that we can get back to swimming and fishing in this
15 river. It's been way too long. Thank you.

16 MS. RAGAZZI: Darren Mierau.

17 MR. MIERAU: Good evening, everybody. My
18 name is Darren Mierau. That's D-a-r-r-e-n. Last
19 name is spelled M-i-e-r-a-u.

20 It sounds so loud on the mic.

21 MS. RAGAZZI: No. It's good.

22 MR. MIERAU: I'm the North Coast Director
23 for California Trout, also our state-wide science
24 director. I'm here speaking on behalf of our
25 organization tonight. I just want to start by

1 thanking the Board, staff, for coming here to have
2 this meeting in Fortuna and also for starting this
3 process so soon, actually surprisingly soon. But,
4 yeah, we welcome the initiation of this process.

5 And we'll be submitting more formal
6 written comments as part of this process, as well.
7 And I think my colleague, Charlie, will be with you
8 tomorrow evening at your next meeting.

9 Anyway, we've been involved in fairly
10 extensive activities in the Eel River since about
11 2012 when I became the director. We started the Eel
12 River Forum and led, you know, monthly and quarterly
13 meetings. Many of you were here during those
14 meetings.

15 And I think one of the key findings from
16 our forum days was putting to rest the idea that
17 there's habitat available for salmon that's up above
18 Lake Pillsbury, and led to, you know, support among
19 many partners for dam removal.

20 We've also -- we're part of the
21 negotiation to take the license from PG&E, sat on
22 hours of Zoom meetings during COVID trying to plan
23 for that. And during that time, we also led several
24 phases of feasibility studies, looking at technical
25 aspects of dam removal and recovery after that.

1 Those studies were funded by the Department of Fish
2 and Wildlife in the state of California. We thank
3 them for their support. And all that information's
4 been posted to the first docket, so it should be
5 available to PG&E for use during dam decommissioning
6 planning and also Board staff during your pending
7 process.

8 And, finally, on that point, we're also
9 negotiating with the department right now to conduct
10 additional technical studies that should support dam
11 removal and post-dam mitigation for the protection
12 of salmon as another native species in the Eel.

13 So as in the past, we would make that
14 information available to the public and PG&E and the
15 Board for your use, as well.

16 We agree with the Board's restoration
17 policy that despite the short-term impacts from dam
18 removal, we think the benefits of long-term removal
19 and habitat restoration and access to that habitat
20 above Lake Pillsbury is vital.

21 And so, you know, we do support that
22 approach, but also with the idea that we need to
23 carefully plan and minimize and mitigate for those
24 impacts that will happen during dam decommissioning,
25 but we feel the long-term trade-offs are definitely

1 beneficial.

2 Several of our core issues will be
3 fisheries protection during deconstruction, the full
4 restoration of the lake bed, footprints, and
5 downstream river ecosystem after decommissioning,
6 and then mitigation for those long-term impacts with
7 adaptive management and monitoring the things that
8 PG&E should be extensively involved with.

9 The water diversion baseline we think
10 should be the current project diversion, not the
11 historic volumes, and we ask the Board to consider
12 modifying that baseline flow condition to reflect
13 those current project operations. I think those
14 days of higher diversion rates are past, and what
15 we're seeing now is basically what the current
16 reservoir capacity has -- the reservoir operations
17 have the capacity for diversion, so those should be
18 the baseline.

19 We support expedited removal and avoiding
20 any delays that we can. I think the Board should
21 condition a 401 certification with extensive pike
22 minnow suppression to enable increased survival of
23 salmonids during and after the decommissioning
24 process, which could mitigate for us some of the
25 impacts that salmonids will feel during the dam

1 removal process.

2 And for the record, we support the closed
3 schedule proposed for the NERF as a very good
4 precedent for functional flows and a percentage flow
5 diversion rate approach.

6 I think that probably is in front of the
7 401, but will come later to you. I just want to
8 make sure that you understand that I support that.

9 That's all I have. Thank you very much.

10 MS. RAGAZZI: Thank you.

11 Next up I have Launa.

12 MS. WYRD: Thank you.

13 My name is Launa Wyrd. It's spelled L-a-
14 u-n-a, W-y-r-d. I'm a resident of Humboldt County.
15 I'm also a licensed professional civil engineer in
16 the state of California specializing in process-
17 based watershed restoration.

18 I want to say that I echo some of the
19 things I've heard in the room already, and that I
20 agree that the Board taking a restoration approach
21 to this dam removal is the correct approach.

22 In the processes that are necessary for
23 helping the river system and helping the watershed,
24 having sufficient water flow, and adequate water
25 quality are two of the most necessary processes to

1 restore. The removal of the Pottery Valley dams
2 will help to restore those processes.

3 I would like to especially echo what
4 Regina has said, that this water is Eel River water
5 that should remain in the Eel River watershed for
6 the restoration of this river that's right outside
7 this window here. I believe an expedited process
8 and doing this as a restoration effort is the best
9 approach.

10 As we've seen with the Klamath Dam
11 removal, yes, there will be short-term impacts from
12 dam removal which should be analyzed and looked at
13 thoroughly.

14 However, there are also continuing impacts
15 that happen by not proceeding quickly with the dam
16 removal, and so that should be a part of this
17 analysis, as well.

18 The more seasons that we have going with
19 these dams in place, the more continued seasons we
20 have of degraded water quality in the Eel River, and
21 so the quickest that the Board can move this process
22 forward, the faster we will see restoration of the
23 system. Also increasing access for salmon that's
24 above the dams and into the -- above Lake Pillsbury
25 itself.

1 I appreciate the efforts here. I
2 appreciate the other things that we've heard here
3 today, and that's all I have.

4 MR. RAGAZZI: Thank you.

5 And next up, we have Eric Stockwell.

6 MR. STOCKWELL: Thank you.

7 Eric Stockwell, E-r-i-c, S-t-o-c-k-w-e-l-
8 l.

9 I am a nearly lifetime resident of Loleta
10 at the mouth of the Eel River, and I want to give
11 you a perspective on how I feel our culture has
12 suffered from the river not having its full flow.

13 I've learned all my life, since I was a
14 child, about the salmon life cycle and the
15 importance of the salmon to the people that live
16 around them. And the degradation of our fisheries
17 has gone largely unnoticed by our culture. It's
18 been over 25 years since you could keep a salmon in
19 the Eel River. We never kept an adult salmon when I
20 was a kid. It goes to the ocean. But being around
21 the salmon, seeing spawners, there's a few thousand
22 salmon within two miles of where we're standing
23 right now. Right now. And most people in Fortuna
24 have no idea about it.

25 Fortuna is the largest community on the

1 entire Eel River. There's no trail to the river. I
2 grew up training myself to look for things on the
3 landscape that are missing, and largely that's
4 salmon, healthy habitat, creeks that function
5 properly.

6 And so many people have become
7 disconnected from the river and the fish that it
8 doesn't even seem like that big of a deal that we
9 don't even have a trail to the river down this levy.

10 I feel that the changes that will take
11 place from the dam removal give our culture an
12 opportunity to reconnect with the fish and the river
13 and to acknowledge and work toward enhancing the
14 relationship between the fish, the river, and
15 ourselves.

16 And just like I always try to look for
17 things that are missing on the landscape to train
18 myself in how it used to be and how ideally we could
19 have it again, I believe that our culture will be
20 prompted to do these things and to appreciate and
21 build on what we're able to restore.

22 There are people in this room that are
23 working very hard, and there are hundreds, thousands
24 of other people in this county, the fish head
25 community, that are working to fix these things.

1 And when it comes to a huge thing like the
2 dams on the Eel River, and again with the Klamath
3 example, this is probably the biggest opportunity in
4 my lifetime for the Eel River to realize rebirth and
5 for the culture here to get reborn along with it.

6 So thank you for being here, and I hope
7 that we are all able to see these changes that I
8 envision, and I think that we all envision for the
9 better of the community.

10 Thank you so much.

11 MS. RAGAZZI: Thank you.

12 Next up is Vivian Helliwell. Please state
13 and spell your name for the court reporter, please.

14 MS. HELLIWELL: Thank you.

15 Hi. My name is Vivian Helliwell, V-i-v-i-
16 a-n, H-e-l-l-i-w-e-l-l. And I'm representing Salmon
17 Returning and Humboldt Fishermen's Marketing
18 Association today, which is a commercial fishing
19 association here in Humboldt.

20 So my family owns a commercial fishing
21 boat for the last 50 years. We fished up and down
22 the coast when fishing was -- when there were
23 bountiful numbers of salmon that included a
24 harvestable surplus, and we've watched the decline
25 of the fisheries in the last few decades affecting

1 the wealth of these communities, the well-being of
2 these communities, and the fishing people,
3 especially.

4 So this taking out the two dams that have
5 been blocking passage to the headwaters on the main
6 stem Eel, be sure to count the beneficial impacts of
7 taking these dams out.

8 I see in your list of impacts as mostly
9 things that could be harmful to resources, people,
10 but leaving the dams in place is very harmful to the
11 fisheries, and this has been continuing for a very
12 long time.

13 So we hope that taking these projects out
14 as soon as possible is going to help revive, as Eric
15 said, our community's connection with the fish, and
16 that we can bring local fish to market again.

17 So temperature and flow and algae, toxic
18 algae, have been really harmful to the fish, and
19 also the pike minnow don't go up into the cold water
20 above Lake Pillsbury. And so when the cold water is
21 flowing down, then that will help, but we need a
22 full basin restoration plan to address some of these
23 problems that have grown over the years, like pike
24 minnow throughout the system and toxic algae. So
25 that we can once again --

1 The same fishermen that don't have a
2 market for their boats now because they can't fish
3 for salmon anymore, I've seen beautiful boats get
4 crushed and destroyed because there's no market for
5 a boat if you don't have a season.

6 So we're having to rely as a community on
7 fish that are imported from fisheries around the
8 world that don't have the same high standards of
9 ecological protection that our fisheries do have.
10 That's why we've stopped fishing in order to rebuild
11 these stocks.

12 It's especially important to restore the
13 Eel River fisheries when the Sacramento River is in
14 trouble, because as the fishery turned to the
15 Klamath Basin, and the Klamath River fisheries zone
16 in the ocean, and the fishery turned to the Eel
17 River, we expect sometime to have a fishery out
18 here.

19 Also, the same fishermen who have
20 commercial boats and are struggling to get by, they
21 also recreate on the river, support fish, swim in
22 the river, and we don't want to have to be afraid to
23 bring our dogs to the river because it's too hot and
24 green. So many benefits will come from taking this
25 project down.

1 The sediment delivery needs to be
2 addressed quickly so that it's a short amount of
3 time that the damage to the aquatic resources takes
4 place, and then that gives more time for the
5 resources to recover. You don't want to continue to
6 have over a long period of time sediment damage.

7 More to say. We're going to submit
8 written comments. And let me just think for a
9 moment since there's not a big rush for the mic
10 here.

11 MS. RAGAZZI: Well, we have two more
12 people, and then you can come back.

13 MS. HELLIWELL: Okay. Let's leave it at
14 that for now, and then I'll talk again later,
15 possibly. Thank you.

16 MS. RAGAZZI: Thank you.

17 Okay. I have Stephen Rosenberg.

18 MR. ROSENBERG: Thank you.

19 My name's Stephen Rosenberg, S-t-e-p-h-e-
20 n, R-o-s-e-n-b-e-r-g. I'm 80 years old. I was an
21 attorney for 45 years. I've spent my whole life in
22 Humboldt County, and I don't want to sound immodest,
23 but I probably know more about the Eel River than
24 any one single individual. I was taught by people
25 two generations older than me about the river. I

1 was fishing when I was seven years old.

2 It used to be a blue river, world-class
3 salmon and steelhead stream. People came from all
4 over the world to fish the Eel River. It supported
5 a lot of business. Now it's nothing. It's catch-
6 and-release fishing only. It's closed whenever the
7 flow is below 350 cubic feet a second. It's become
8 infested with squawfish.

9 And where did those squawfish come from?
10 They came from illegal planning into a reservoir,
11 the very reservoirs that are dammed, that are the
12 subject of the dam removal before you. Had those
13 reservoirs never been there and the diversion to the
14 Russian River never existed, this river would not be
15 infested with squawfish.

16 We now have no commercial fishery for
17 salmonids in Humboldt County in the entire Klamath
18 management zone, and there is no longer a major fish
19 plant in Humboldt County. The commercial fishermen
20 here have been forced to go to Brookings and Coos
21 Bay, Oregon, to fish, where they have much better
22 management.

23 These dams should come down immediately.
24 This river is the third largest river in the state
25 of California. It has the capacity to spawn up

1 hundreds of thousands of salmon and steelhead, yet
2 it's the only river that does not have a fish
3 hatchery.

4 The Klamath River, in connection with the
5 dam removal, got a brand-new fish hatchery. That's
6 why there's fish. Fish were already planted there
7 before the dam removal, and they're coming back
8 already. We need a massive squawfish eradication
9 program, and we need to completely stop diversions
10 to the Russian River.

11 One thing nobody has touched on is what
12 does inter-basin diversion do in California? It has
13 caused excessive population growth and agricultural
14 growth in areas way beyond their natural capacity to
15 sustain themselves.

16 For example, Santa Rosa used to be smaller
17 than Eureka when I was a young man. Now it's about
18 500,000 people. And trust me, they want our water.

19 This two-basin solution, to me, is a
20 political cop-out. Every drop of that water should
21 go down the Eel River. And if you don't agree with
22 me and agree there should be diversion continuing
23 during high-water portions of the year, there
24 shouldn't be any at all when the rainy season ends,
25 and that rainy season ends on April 15th, generally.

1 It doesn't start up again until October 15th.

2 There should be no diversion at all during
3 that period, as a bottom line. But the very best
4 thing is to have no inter-basin diversion. It's
5 absolutely ruined the Trinity River. Despite all
6 the restoration efforts on the Trinity River since
7 it was dammed in the early '60s and the water
8 diverted to the Sacramento River, the fish have not
9 recovered there because inter-basin diversion
10 prevents the avulsing flows needed to restore and
11 clean the spawning beds.

12 So please have the courage to knock these
13 dams down immediately, stop the diversions,
14 incorporate a massive squawfish reduction plan, like
15 is in effect on the Columbia River, and get us a
16 fish hatchery.

17 Thank you.

18 MS. RAGGAZI: Thank you.

19 Okay. The last speaker card I have is for
20 -- I think it's Cena Marino.

21 MS. MARINO: I'm a retired school
22 psychologist.

23 MS. RAGAZZI: Can you speak your name and
24 spell it your first for the court reporter?

25 MS. MARINO: C-e-n-a, M-a-r-i-n-o.

1 So I came to Eureka about 50 years ago to
2 go to school, and I've stayed here. And my heart
3 has some concerns.

4 Who pays for the cleanup and for how long
5 when the dams are down? Who will test the water
6 after the dams are gone? Where will it be tested,
7 and when, and how long? And who will be responsible
8 to fix the problems that occur after the dams are
9 down?

10 And which tribal lands are affected, and
11 how do they feel about the dam removal? I bet they
12 like it.

13 MS. RAGAZZI: Thank you so much.

14 Okay. Is there anybody else who would
15 like to make additional comments or who has not
16 spoken and would like to make comments this evening?

17 MR. ROSENBERG: I have one additional
18 comment.

19 MS. RAGGAZI: Sure. Do you want to -- and
20 just state your name again, so it's on the record.
21 You don't have to spell your name.

22 MR. ROSENBERG: Stephen Rosenberg.

23 I want to touch on something that Eric
24 Stockwell said.

25 We have lost all our public access to the

1 lower Eel River. It's been blocked off because of
2 garbage dumping and transients, and so there's no
3 place to drive down and launch a boat now. Some of
4 these pools just can't be weighted with fish, and so
5 we've lost an entire sport fishery.

6 And I have legions of friends just over
7 the border to Brookings, to Coos Bay, to Reedsport,
8 and they have beautiful boat facilities, public
9 access in all rivers for people, and that's where
10 people are going to fish now. They have good
11 hatchery programs. They use carefully selected
12 genetic wild broodstock programs, and their rivers
13 and bays are full of fish. So that's the difference
14 between here and just 80 miles north.

15 So it's time for us to finally get down to
16 business here and get things done for this river.

17 Thank you. It's the economics. I think
18 that's one of your considerations. We've lost our
19 economy here, a large part of it.

20 MS. RAGGAZI: Vivian, do you want to --

21 MS. HELLIWELL: Yes, please.

22 Vivian Helliwell. I want to support the
23 comments of Stephen -- sorry. Stephen Rosenberg.
24 Very well, thoughtful comments.

25 Fishermen in the ocean used to come from

1 all up and down the coast. This is not just a local
2 issue. People came from all over the state and out
3 of state to sport fish in the Eel River, as well.
4 So the economic impact on our area and coastal
5 communities here has been very detrimental but can
6 be very beneficial.

7 And we'd like you to consider impacts all
8 the way to the river mouth, and consider the
9 benefits of the winter flushing flows and the
10 importance of them for cleaning out the river and
11 keeping it cold, rolling the rocks around. We need
12 to roll those rocks.

13 That's all I have to add. Thank you.

14 MS. RAGGAZI: Thank you.

15 Okay. Any other comments before we wrap
16 up the meeting tonight?

17 I do want to remind folks that the
18 PowerPoint will be available on our website. And,
19 as you know, we have the court reporter here today,
20 so we'll be putting that out as well once we get the
21 transcripts for all of the meeting together.

22 Okay. Safe travels, everyone. Thank you
23 for coming tonight.

24 (WHEREUPON, the Public Scoping Meeting
25 concluded at 7:04 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE

I, Spencer Fortin, do hereby certify that I reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing matter and that the foregoing transcript pages constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said proceedings to the best of my ability.

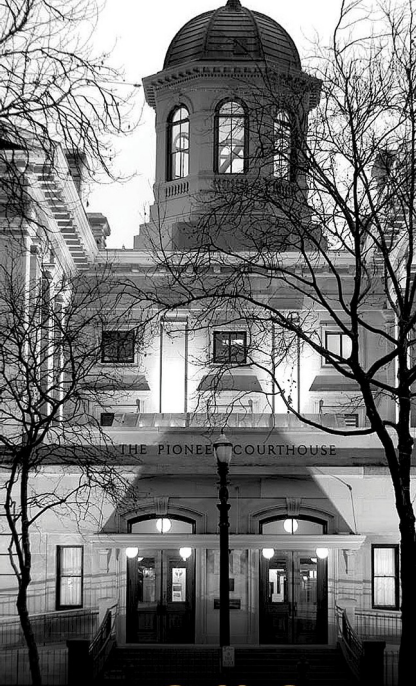
I further certify that I am neither related to counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any interest in the outcome of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 31st day of October, 2025.



Spencer Fortin

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HELD ON

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1 APPEARANCES

2
3 ON BEHALF OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER BOARDS:

4 Nathan Fisch, Senior Environmental Scientist

5 Wilhelmina Chon,

6 Environmental Scientist, Project Manager

7 Erin Ragazzi, Assistant Deputy Director

8 Parker Thaler, Project Manager

9 Dana Heinrich, Esquire, Office of Chief Counsel

10 Shannon Luoma, Regulatory Section Manager,

11 Kleinschmidt Associates

12 Carissa Shoemaker, Licensing Coordinator,

13 Kleinschmidt Associates

14
15 PUBLIC COMMENTERS

16 James Russ

17 Julia Carrera

18 Duncan James

19 John Almida

20 Frank Lynch

21 Nikole Whipple

22 Nancy Todd

23 Mike Shaver

24 Andrew Nicoll

25 Jeannie Fulton

APPEARANCES (CONTINUED)

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PUBLIC COMMENTERS

Pete Halstad

Dakota Perez

1 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

2 HELD ON

3 WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2025

4 11:32 A.M.

5
6 NATHAN FISCH: All right. Good morning,
7 everyone. Good morning. Thank you for taking your
8 time out of your day to join us here.

9 My name is Nathan Fisch. I'm a senior
10 environmental scientist at the California State
11 Water Resources Control Board.

12 This is the second of four public scoping
13 meetings we're holding to give the opportunity to
14 provide feedback on the Notice of Preparation of an
15 Environmental Impact Report for the Potter Valley
16 Hydroelectric Project Surrender and Decommissioning
17 Project.

18 So please note today's meeting is being
19 transcribed by Spencer. So when we come to the
20 public comment period, please enunciate and spell
21 your name.

22 We have a number of people here for the
23 State Water Board Team, so let me introduce them.

24 On the end we have one of our assistant
25 deputy directors, Erin Ragazzi.

1 To her right -- or her left is Dana
2 Heinrich in the Office of Chief Counsel.

3 Behind me is Wilhelmina Chon, an
4 environmental scientist and project manager for
5 Potter Valley.

6 And then we have Spencer, who is our court
7 reporter.

8 And Parker Thaler, our environmental
9 program manager.

10 Sorry. You probably met him on the way
11 in.

12 So what's the plan today? So in a few
13 minutes, I'm going to hand things over to
14 Wilhelmina, who will provide some background on the
15 State Water Board and water quality certifications.

16 Then we'll provide a brief overview of the
17 California Environmental Quality Act process and how
18 the public can provide input. And then we'll walk
19 through an overview of the Potter Valley
20 Hydroelectric Project and PG&E's surrender
21 application.

22 Next we'll discuss how everyone can stay
23 informed with the State Water Board's process. And
24 finally, we'll open the floor to receive verbal
25 comments from any meeting participants that are

1 present here today.

2 So before we get into that, though, we can
3 just talk some meeting logistics.

4 So everyone came in through here, and
5 there are bathrooms through these doors to the
6 right. There's also some water found available if
7 people want to get a drink.

8 In the event of an emergency, please use
9 the exit doors here, come around the building and
10 meet in front, and once we get the all clear we'll
11 come back and reconvene the meeting.

12 And then once we get to the public comment
13 period, please respect all viewpoints that everyone
14 has here. Everyone's taking time out of their day
15 to provide some comments.

16 As a reminder, today's meeting is being
17 transcribed by a court reporter, so please introduce
18 your name, spell it, and enunciate the best you can.

19 If anyone's having trouble seeing the
20 presentation, please flag down someone from the
21 State Water Board. We have a couple copies of the
22 presentation printed. And then lastly, save all
23 comments until the public comment period at the end
24 of the presentation.

25 With that, I will hand it over to

1 Wilhelmina.

2 ERIN RAGAZZI: And just a quick -- I want
3 to invite everyone to come into the room and take a
4 seat if you're interested in doing so. There's lots
5 of spaces.

6 NATHAN FISCH: Okay.

7 WILHELMINA CHON: Thanks, Nathan.

8 So hello, my name is Wilhelmina Chon, and
9 I'm an environmental scientist in the Division of
10 Water Rights and project manager for Potter Valley.

11 So why is the State Water Board involved?
12 The State Water Board has authority over water
13 rights and water quality in California. Our mission
14 is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of
15 California's water resources, as well as protect and
16 allocate water for many beneficial uses.

17 We are here today because Section 401 of
18 the Clean Water Act requires that any applicant
19 seeking a federal license or permit where the
20 proposed activity may result in a discharge to
21 surface water is required to obtain a water quality
22 certification from the State Water Board.

23 The State Water Board conditions
24 hydroelectric projects via water quality
25 certifications to ensure the protection of the

1 State's waters.

2 Now I'd like to go over water quality
3 certifications and how they are related to the
4 federal license surrender order. Water quality
5 certifications focus on protecting water quality and
6 the beneficial uses of water.

7 If a water quality certification is
8 issued, the conditions then become a mandatory part
9 of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
10 license or the surrender order for the project.

11 Water quality certifications ensure that a
12 project will comply with water quality objectives
13 and beneficial uses as outlined in the Regional
14 Water Quality Control Plans, also known as Basin
15 Plans.

16 In this case, the North Coast Regional
17 Water Quality Control Plans as adopted by the North
18 Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

19 Certifications must include conditions to
20 ensure compliance with water quality control
21 policies and other applicable requirements of state
22 law. For example, a certification will require
23 compliance with the Board's Dredge or Fill
24 Procedures to ensure protection of state waters,
25 including wetlands.

1 PG&E plans to apply for a water quality
2 certification for their proposed project. The State
3 Water Board is non-positional and will act on the
4 application for water quality certification that we
5 anticipate receiving.

6 However, before the State Water Board can
7 issue a water quality certification, it must first
8 comply with the California Environmental Quality
9 Act, which I'll go over later.

10 In addition, the North Coast Regional
11 Water Quality Control Board adopted the policy in
12 Support of Restoration in the North Coast Region on
13 January 29, 2015. The Restoration Policy states
14 that the Boards may permit or certify restoration
15 projects that result in significant and sometimes
16 unavoidable -- unavoidable impacts if it is shown
17 that the project will result in long-term protection
18 of beneficial uses and water quality.

19 Under the Restoration Policy, temporary
20 exceedances in turbidity, temperatures or other
21 water quality objectives in project-affected water
22 bodies can be authorized as long as it is shown that
23 the project will result in long-term protection of
24 beneficial uses and water quality objectives.

25 And that leads us to the California

1 Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA. CEQA informs
2 the State Water Board and the public about the
3 proposed project's potentially significant
4 environmental effects and ways to avoid, minimize,
5 or mitigate those impacts.

6 Since PG&E is not a public agency, the
7 State Water Board will be the lead agency for CEQA
8 and will prepare the CEQA document. In this case,
9 the State Water Board will be preparing a CEQA
10 document called an Environmental Impact Report, or
11 EIR.

12 The CEQA document will be used to support
13 the conditions in the water quality certification
14 for the proposed project. Generally, the State
15 Water Board cannot issue a water quality
16 certification without completing CEQA.

17 So the purpose of CEQA scoping is to
18 identify potentially significant environmental
19 impacts associated with the proposed project.
20 Comments received during scoping meetings help
21 determine the scope of environmental review, as well
22 as identify potential -- potential project
23 alternatives and mitigation measures for potentially
24 significant impacts that may arise from the project.

25 This flowchart provides a high-level

1 overview of the State Water Board's CEQA process.
2 After an Environmental Impact Report is deemed
3 necessary, the State Water Board conducts scoping
4 meetings such as this one to solicit public input to
5 help in the development of the report.

6 Once an Environmental Impact Report is
7 complete or -- sorry.

8 When a draft Environmental Impact Report
9 is ready for release, it will be released for a
10 public comment for a minimum of 45 days.

11 After the public comment period concludes,
12 the State Water Board will then review and respond
13 to any public input that was received. Lastly, the
14 State Water Board will issue a final Environmental
15 Impact Report for the project.

16 Next, I will provide a brief overview of
17 the Potter Valley Project.

18 The Potter Valley Project is owned and
19 operated by PG&E and is located on the Eel River in
20 East Branch Russian River in Lake and Mendocino
21 Counties. The nearest city is Ukiah, which is
22 approximately 15 miles southwest of Potter Valley
23 Powerhouse.

24 This is an existing project, which is
25 comprised of Scott Dam, Lake Pillsbury, Potter

1 Valley Powerhouse, Cape Horn Dam, Van Arsdale
2 Reservoir, and several recreation areas. Water from
3 the Eel River is diverted at Cape Horn Dam and is
4 discharged to the East Branch Russian River.

5 Prior to 2022, PG&E looked for a new owner
6 of the project but was unable to find one. PG&E
7 made the decision to surrender and decommission the
8 Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project.

9 In May and June 2022, PG&E, at the request
10 of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, filed
11 an initial plan and schedule to submit a Surrender
12 and Decommissioning Plan.

13 PG&E submitted their Final Surrender
14 Application to FERC in July of 2025 and intends to
15 apply for a water quality certification.

16 Again, I'm reiterating that the State
17 Water Board is non-positional and will act on the
18 application for water quality certifications that we
19 anticipate receiving.

20 Today's meeting is meant to solicit public
21 input that can inform the development of the State
22 Water Board's CEQA documents.

23 Next I will provide an overview of the
24 Potter Valley License Surrender and Decommissioning
25 Project. As part of the proposed project, PG&E is

1 requesting to surrender and decommission the Potter
2 Valley Hydroelectric Project with the Federal Energy
3 Regulatory Commission.

4 The proposed project involves removal of
5 Scott and Cape Horn Dams and associated facilities
6 followed by restoration of the former lake areas.

7 In addition, PG&E is proposing to leave
8 the diversion facilities in place for future
9 diversions by a different party. I'll cover more on
10 that in a later slide.

11 Recreational facilities will either be
12 removed, restored, or transferred to another party.
13 Finally, the project includes 41 proposed plans and
14 measures, some of which have already been developed
15 and some to be developed, which will be shown on the
16 next slide.

17 PG&E has proposed the following 41 plans
18 and measures as part of their surrender and
19 decommissioning plan. I'm not going over each plan
20 and measure in detail today, but if you would like
21 more information or the full list of plans, please
22 see the Notice of Preparation that we issued on
23 September 22, 2025.

24 The Notice of Preparation is available on
25 our Potter Valley webpage, and the web address will

1 be shown at the end of the presentation.

2 So CEQA helps us to identify which
3 potentially significant impacts the project may
4 have. The State Water Board expects that a number
5 of potentially significant impacts may occur as a
6 result of the proposed project. The resources on
7 the slide are part of -- part of a preliminary and
8 non-exhaustive list that would be potentially
9 significantly impacted by the project.

10 Please note, there is a concurrent project
11 that is separate from PG&E's surrender and
12 decommissioning project that is also not part of the
13 CEQA process. That project is called the New Eel
14 Russian -- the New Eel Russian Facility, or NERF,
15 and the Eel Russian Project Authority will be the
16 CEQA lead for that project.

17 The Authority is expected to seek a
18 separate water quality certification for the NERF in
19 the future. If you'd like more information, please
20 contact the Eel Russian Project Authority directly.

21 Now I'll hand it over to Nathan.

22 NATHAN FISCH: Thanks, Wilhelmina.

23 Now I'd like to provide -- to discuss
24 options to provide public comments today.

25 So if you'd like to provide comments

1 today, there are speaker cards at the back where you
2 can indicate whether you would like to speak or
3 provide written comments.

4 If you would not like to provide oral
5 comments, you can just check that box. After you
6 fill out the card, please hand it to one of the
7 State Water Board staff who will collect them.

8 Since we have multiple people here, we're
9 expecting, you know -- we want to make sure everyone
10 has plenty of time. So once we get to the public
11 comment period, we'll let you know how much time we
12 have for each speaker.

13 And then I'd also just lastly remind folks
14 that we have -- we're accepting comments through
15 November 3rd that carry the same weight as any oral
16 or written comments today, and we'll provide more
17 information on how to provide those written comments
18 at the end of the presentation.

19 So back to you, Wilhelmina.

20 WILHELMINA CHON: The State Water Board is
21 seeking comments on project alternatives,
22 potentially significant impacts, mitigation
23 measures, and anything related to the project to
24 help us in the development of an Environmental
25 Impact Report.

1 We plan to evaluate PG&E's proposed
2 project and a range of alternatives. Any input on
3 specific project alternatives would be helpful.
4 Other comments regarding potential impacts of the
5 project and potential mitigation measures to lessen
6 those impacts would be helpful as well. All public
7 comments submitted by November 3, 2025, will be
8 considered.

9 After the draft Environmental Impact
10 Report is released, there will be another public
11 comment and public review with public comment period
12 to solicit input on that document.

13 This slide provides -- provides ways to
14 stay informed and up to date on the project. The
15 State Water Board will continue to update the Potter
16 Valley Hydroelectric webpage with information and
17 findings regarding a CEQA and water quality
18 certification process. The state -- sorry. The
19 site URL for the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project
20 is shown on the current slide.

21 On the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
22 webpage, you can find the Notice of Preparation that
23 we issued on September 22, 2025. The Notice of
24 Preparation has information on how to subscribe to
25 our online notification system called Gov Delivery.

1 If you sign up for Gov Delivery -- sorry.
2 If you sign up, Gov Delivery will send you
3 emails related to the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
4 Project and other projects pursuing certifications
5 managed by the Division of Water Rights.

6 As a reminder, we are accepting written
7 comments until 4:00 p.m. on November 3, 2025,
8 regarding the range of alternatives, potential
9 significant effects, and mitigation measures that
10 should be analyzed in the Environmental Impact
11 Report. Directions on how to submit comments by
12 email or hard copy mail are shown on this slide.

13 Thank you for your attention. Before we
14 open the floor to public comments, I would like to
15 go over some reminders.

16 Please use the microphone to speak, and
17 one speaker at a time. Please be sure to state and
18 spell your name for the court reporter before
19 providing your comments. And then please stay to
20 your allotted time and respect all speakers' points
21 of view. If you do not wish to speak today, you can
22 also provide written comments.

23 And I'll hand it over to Erin.

24 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thanks, Mina.

25 Okay. We're going to open it up for

1 public comment now. We're going to invite folks to
2 come up and speak into the microphone. Please use
3 the microphone so that other folks can hear, but
4 more importantly, Spencer can hear and he can make
5 sure that he transcribes your comments accurately.

6 I'm also going to ask people to state
7 their name at the beginning and spell their name so
8 that he gets that information.

9 And the other thing that's really
10 beneficial is if you can speak a little slowly, that
11 will also help him make sure he captures what you
12 have to say here today. He's really fast but not
13 super-fast if you're talking really quickly.

14 With that, I'm going to ask -- we're going
15 to start with five minutes, and if anybody feels
16 like five minutes is not sufficient, once everybody
17 has spoken, you can come back up and make additional
18 comments.

19 So I'm going to ask James Russ to come up
20 as our first speaker.

21 JAMES RUSS: Thank you. I usually prefer
22 to speak last, but that's the way the ball bounces.

23 ERIN RAGAZZI: If you -- if you prefer.

24 JAMES RUSS: No. No. That's cool.

25 So my name is James Russ. And do you want

1 me to spell that? J-a-m-e-s. Last name R-u-s-s.
2 Today I'm representing the Round Valley Indian
3 Tribes. I just want to make a few comments this
4 morning and then we'll be submitting written
5 comments as well.

6 The Round Valley Indian Tribes are a
7 federally-recognized sovereign Indian tribe. Our
8 reservation is on the Eel River, and we have a
9 responsibility to fight for its health.

10 Our reservation is located in the
11 northeast corner of Mendocino County. The project
12 is located within our ancestral homelands. Our
13 cultural and way of life are forever tied to the Eel
14 River, and we depend on a healthy salmon fishery.

15 Our goal is a free-flowing Eel River with
16 a restored fishery. That was included in a tribal
17 resolution back in 2009, which -- which had certain
18 things that were in the resolution, and the main one
19 was that we wanted a free-flowing Eel River, which
20 means that we wanted the dams to be taken out.

21 We -- so, therefore, we support PG&E's
22 plan to remove both Scott Dam and Cape Horn Dam. We
23 support the efforts of Russian River water users to
24 take steps to improve water storage and conveyance
25 for their needs consistent with the Two Basin

1 Solution goals of water supply, reliability, and Eel
2 River restoration.

3 The environmental analysis of the project
4 decommissioning and water quality certification must
5 recognize as part of the baseline against which
6 impacts are assessed, our current and historical
7 connection to the Eel River, its fishery, and the
8 project site.

9 Our unique perspective must be used to --
10 to inform the terms and conditions of the project
11 decommissioning and water quality certification.

12 In order to ensure our tribal cultural
13 resources are fully protected, the California
14 Environmental Quality Act, CEQA, specifically AB 52,
15 requires the State Water Board to meaningfully
16 consult with Round Valley Indian Tribes in the
17 development of an environmental analysis and
18 mitigation measures to protect tribal, cultural and
19 other resources.

20 The scope of the CEQA review should
21 include measures to avoid as much as possible any
22 impacts to tribal cultural resources from dam
23 removal and water quality certification. Avoidance,
24 rather than mitigation, should be the primary goal.

25 We look forward to working with the State

1 Water Board to ensure that the dams are removed as
2 quickly as possible and the impacts to tribal
3 cultural resources are avoided.

4 Thank you.

5 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

6 Next I have Julia, last name starts with a
7 C.

8 JULIA CARRERA: Julia Carrera. J-u-l-i-a.
9 C-a-r-r-e-r-a. I am a candidate for the third
10 district supervisor in Lake County where Lake
11 Pillsbury exists. I am also a descendant of the
12 Potter Valley Tribe, and I'm here also as an
13 environmental scientist.

14 I am concerned about what's happening and
15 what will happen to Lake County with the
16 decommissioning project, specifically as it relates
17 to Lake Pillsbury, not only from an economic and a
18 cultural perspective for the county of Lake and for
19 the tribes, but also for the environmental impact
20 that will negatively be happening with the
21 decommissioning.

22 If the Water Board were to look at aerial
23 photos today of the flow of water right now, you
24 will see there is minimal to none. And this
25 solution that I appreciate and honor the folks that

1 came together to put the solution together I don't
2 think is the best solution. I encourage other
3 solutions including keeping the existing dams.

4 Thank you.

5 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

6 Next I have Duncan -- the last name starts
7 with a J. I can't tell for sure how it's spelled.

8 Thank you, Duncan. State and spell your
9 name for the record.

10 DUNCAN JAMES: Sure. No problem. My name
11 is Duncan James, D-u-n-c-a-n, that's the first, and
12 the last name everybody can say.

13 All right. First of all, I would like to
14 provide to the parties that are here today -- you're
15 legal counsel; correct? Can you hand legal counsel
16 that document?

17 I've handed -- handed to legal counsel the
18 document which is a -- to shorten the title down,
19 it's LaMalfa versus PG&E. LaMalfa versus PG&E is a
20 lawsuit that was filed approximately 10 days ago
21 against Pacific Gas and Electric because of their
22 attempts to take down the dams, because to take down
23 the dams interferes with the riparian rights of the
24 downstream owners of the riparian property.

25 That's not just in Mendocino County. That

1 begins in Lake County down through Mendocino County
2 and all the way through Sonoma County to the mouth
3 of the Russian River.

4 And as a result of that, I filed an
5 objection, and I sent this to Ms. Chan yesterday. I
6 emailed it to her that the State Water Resources
7 Control Board has no jurisdiction over riparian
8 rights except as to unlawful diversions or abuse of
9 the use of their riparian rights.

10 Because the riparian right goes to the
11 land. It doesn't go to the owner of the land. It
12 goes to the land for the purpose of, in this county,
13 Sonoma County, agricultural purposes.

14 Now, when PG&E first or when PG&E's
15 predecessor, Eel River Irrigation and Power, built
16 the Van Arsdale Dam, we call it the Van Arsdale --
17 to correct, I guess it's Cape Horn Dam with the Van
18 Arsdale Reservoir, they built it in 1905 and 1907.

19 Attached as an exhibit to the complaint we
20 just handed to you is a copy of some very
21 interesting documents, and they're the USGS
22 monitoring station measurements in the rivers, not
23 only the Eel River as it comes out of Scott Dam
24 beginning in 1920 through 1924, it measures the
25 intake at the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Plant.

1 During the same period of time, it
2 measures the inflow in the what's known as Coyote
3 Valley, which for those of us that live here, it's
4 all buried under Lake Mendocino on the east fork of
5 the Russian River, which then exits the Coyote Dam
6 and flows into the beginning of the Russian River.

7 And you can see by comparing the different
8 measurements how much water has really been coming
9 down through -- through the east fork of the Russian
10 River and the Russian River since the construction
11 of the two dams.

12 When those dams were built, they were
13 built strictly for hydroelectric purposes. And it's
14 my position that because they were built for
15 hydroelectric purposes and not agricultural
16 purposes, they do not have a riparian right, they
17 being PG&E.

18 PG&E's rights are post-1914 appropriative
19 rights based upon their 1922 opening up of Scott
20 Dam. And so, yes, you may have jurisdiction over
21 their appropriative rights, and I don't dispute that
22 the slightest bit. I do dispute their ability to
23 destroy the agricultural community.

24 We will revert back to pre-1905 dry
25 farming. If you get back into the history of Potter

1 Valley or this valley, you'll see that in that
2 period of time it was dry farmed. And, in fact,
3 when you get back into history, you're going to find
4 out that where you're sitting right now is a Mexican
5 land grant.

6 It's a Mexican land grant granted to
7 Cayetano Juarez in 1845. And because it's a Mexican
8 land grant, the riparian rights predate the
9 existence of the state of California.

10 And so as you will see in my complaint, I
11 very specifically addressed that authority as well
12 as the Sanel Rancho, which begins at the top of
13 Burke Hill just south of town.

14 And as you drive down to Sonoma County
15 tomorrow, just after you go through Hopland, you're
16 going to cross a green metal bridge at the two
17 lanes. That's where the Sanel Rancho ends. There's
18 no rancho between there and the Mendocino County
19 line.

20 And so I submit that the laws that relate
21 to Mexican land grants also apply to this entire
22 valley, and that the land grant here for this valley
23 actually goes about halfway up the east fork of the
24 Russian River, across Highway 20 into the beginnings
25 of Potter Valley.

1 And so I submit that as it relates to
2 riparian rights the State Water Quality Control
3 Board has no -- no ability to regulate those rights
4 other than as for improper diversion or abusive use.

5 Thank you.

6 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you, Duncan.

7 Next up, I have John Almida.

8 JOHN ALMIDA: My name is John Almida, J-o-
9 h-n, A-l-m-i-d-a. My family's been in Mendocino
10 County since 1911. I actually worked for the county
11 of Mendocino for 21 years and retired as a senior
12 road crew supervisor. I worked on a lot of road
13 projects out there at the Eel River area.

14 I know from the history of this county
15 that without the diversions, this county will
16 economically collapse. Whether we take the dams out
17 and have a diversion by a new facility or we leave
18 the dams in, the problem with the environmental
19 community that they don't see, and they should go
20 and review and you should review also, a video
21 called The River's Last Chance.

22 In that they'll talk about all the
23 problems of why the fish population has gone down.
24 The major problem you would think would be the
25 logging, and it did when they used dozer shows

1 instead of high leads.

2 But the major problem today is the illegal
3 dope growers putting contaminants back into the Eel
4 River north of Willits and south of Fortuna, that
5 great big area of over 100 miles, has destroyed the
6 fish population.

7 You'll see in that video that the salmon
8 can't even -- their senses to migrate to their
9 spawning grounds will not work because of all the
10 pollutions. I've swam in that river up by Benbow
11 and came out of there with my back burning and never
12 went back in it again because of the pollution.

13 You don't hear the environmental community
14 talk about going after that situation, and we need
15 to be going after that situation.

16 The other situation the environmental
17 community always uses is that these dams sit on
18 earthquake faults. Almost every dam in California
19 sits on an earthquake fault. They admitted it
20 themselves.

21 I would rather see the dams there and the
22 \$500 million that's going be spent by PG&E would be
23 used to structurally make it sound and build a
24 proper fish ladder. And if it takes a proper fish
25 ladder, both Van Arsdale and Scott's Dam didn't do

1 it, \$500 million is a lot of money.

2 But if it ends up taking these two
3 facilities out, there's another issue. The deep
4 watering at Cape Horn Dam is going to be a short
5 period of time for both Sonoma and Mendocino County
6 to come up with the financing to pay for the
7 diversion facility that has to be built at \$50
8 million.

9 Now, when I was at an environmental
10 meeting with the community, they told me that -- I
11 asked them about this question. What if they can't
12 garner these finances in time that the dewatering
13 happens? And they said, well, I guess it doesn't
14 happen. That showed me a lot of disrespect for
15 Mendocino and Sonoma County.

16 If this facility isn't built and they
17 don't have the -- the finances, the transfers end
18 immediately. That means this county will
19 economically collapse, I'll guarantee you that, and
20 it's not just from the agriculture.

21 We have businesses, MRC, whether it be
22 well water, which is aquifers filled by the Russian
23 River, or whether it be water companies supplying
24 water, they have to water their decks. We found out
25 in the 1950s if you don't water cold decks in a

1 mill, they'll catch fire.

2 So there's quite a bit of water use there.

3 So if the mill goes down, how many jobs do we lose?

4 How many jobs do we lose in other places?

5 This is the last working hub in Mendocino
6 Lake County. If you go to the top of the ridge and
7 you watch Willits, which is now a veteran community,
8 on a work day coming down here you'll see how many
9 people commute down here. I commuted for 13 years.

10 My wife commuted for 21 years down here.

11 You can go to the Lake County line and
12 watch how many people that come across to go to work
13 over here in Mendocino County, and you'll see how
14 dependent that this last working hub in Mendocino
15 County is.

16 If we don't have a water supply, we crash.
17 That means that affects Sheriff's Department,
18 affects social services, it affects every mandated
19 thing that the state of California makes Mendocino
20 County do.

21 I believe that PG&E should fund a loan for
22 this to make sure that it happens within that window
23 of time and that Mendocino and Sonoma County do not
24 lose out on building that transfer facility if these
25 dams are taken out, and that should be tied legally

1 to their agreement and then that would ensure that
2 we still have transfers.

3 Thank you.

4 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

5 Next is Frank Lynch.

6 FRANK LYNCH: My name is Frank Lynch,
7 Frank, common spelling, Lynch, L-y-n-c-h. My family
8 has had a place at Lake Pillsbury since 1947, and I
9 live in northern Sonoma County.

10 And where I get my water at home in Sonoma
11 County is underflow from the Russian River. So
12 either way, either Pillsbury or home in Sonoma
13 County, I'm tied into the waters that come out of
14 Lake Pillsbury.

15 I'm not going to blame PG&E. They're in a
16 business and they're losing money because they think
17 there's alternatives that are out there for
18 producing energy, but they do have an obligation to
19 address environmental concerns, and so that's why
20 we're here today.

21 Lake Pillsbury should be looked at as a
22 regional asset for the whole of the North Coast.
23 Water system serves 600,000 people. And from a
24 purely economic perspective, is it better to
25 reinvest in these dams, make them fish-friendly,

1 make them seismically sound, or to take care or tear
2 them out.

3 And what you're going to be benefiting are
4 maybe some fish species. But more likely, those
5 fish species are being affected by this sort of
6 volume practices, as I said earlier, by the cannabis
7 industry and a lot of other factors. Fisheries are
8 dying in all of the north -- the northern
9 hemisphere, whether there's dams on them or not.

10 Again, the cost of removal is \$500
11 million. The cost of all the alternative
12 infrastructure that needs to be developed should the
13 dams come out, because they're going to have to come
14 up with some other water storage facilities, ranges
15 from around 500 million to take out, maybe up to 2
16 billion or more for the alternative infrastructure
17 that needs to be developed. So I think money could
18 be better spent.

19 And you also have to consider all of the
20 associated impacts that will result from those new
21 water facilities that need to be created.

22 Lake Pillsbury is the best firefighting
23 resource we have in the region. It affects five
24 counties which draw water during peak periods of
25 wildfire.

1 And the two largest wildfires in recent
2 history, one came from the north, one came from the
3 south, and they were stopped by the physical barrier
4 of Lake Pillsbury. Without that lake there, quite
5 honestly, the people that have places up there, to
6 put it delicately, we're screwed. There's no other
7 water source that we would have.

8 This is not the Klamath River, where
9 there's perennial flows. It was said earlier.
10 Right now there's a trickle at best, and this is --
11 although we had rain yesterday -- the peak of fire
12 season and so there's not going to be any water for
13 fire suppression.

14 As it reads now, PG&E's plan is a plan to
15 have a plan. There's no solid mitigation offer.
16 There's going to be studies. But those studies and
17 mitigations, you need to consider those.

18 Mitigations have to live on for probably
19 two dozen years because of all of the long-term
20 impacts, with sediment releases, with impacts to all
21 the wildlife resources that are in the area that
22 would be affected. And so you need to really have a
23 very solid and well-financed mitigation program
24 should that come to pass.

25 Also, I can say this, that my well at Lake

1 Pillsbury is clearly impacted by the presence of the
2 lake, and I'll lose my water at Lake Pillsbury
3 should the dam go.

4 Under the plan right now with the Eel
5 Russian River Project Authority, they would be
6 withdrawing water from the Eel, transferring to the
7 Russian only during high-peak flows. That's not
8 very reassuring, as now we have year-round ability
9 to draft water.

10 And I think it was 2015/16 winters, I'm
11 not sure of the exact dates, but I at that time
12 asked the deputy director of Sonoma County Water how
13 many high winter flow days did you have this winter
14 where you could have got water? The answer was
15 zero. No days where there would be high flows.

16 Again, mitigation monitoring for the
17 future for the aesthetics of the area, the
18 biological resources that need to be considered, the
19 river channel and the sediment flows that's going to
20 be going through there, and 50 percent of the
21 sediments are going to flow downstream and clog the
22 rivers, but you're going to need to have long-term
23 plans and long-term monitoring to make sure that the
24 mitigations that are put in will adapt as we go
25 through time.

1 One of the things in the environmental or
2 the document released by PG&E that should be noted
3 is they do not include all of the residential
4 communities within the Lake Pillsbury basin.

5 They completely ignore the Lake Pillsbury
6 Ranch, which has about 250 lots, 165 homes. They
7 don't count part of the -- the Rice Fork area, which
8 has 30 homes, and those homes are a private fee type
9 of land. They're not leased properties.

10 And they only mention the Lake Pillsbury
11 home sites, which are long-term forest service
12 lease. There's 71 homes there. They don't count
13 all the -- the summer users.

14 This is the hub of the Mendocino National
15 Forest, and it's an essential component for that
16 area. Should the dam go, there needs to be
17 something done with area circulation.

18 Transportation within the Pillsbury basin
19 needs to be improved because right now, you have
20 dead-end roads, and dead-end roads when there's even
21 no water there to help fight fires, this could
22 really be a catastrophe.

23 What it really is going to take -- the
24 alternative should be that this is a state and
25 federal problem. There needs to be some buy-in, a

1 joint powers entity coming forward.

2 And under CEQA, a final note, if you're
3 going to approve a project with an EIR and you
4 acknowledge that there is many unmitigated impacts,
5 which the PG&E document does state, you have to
6 adopt a statement of overriding considerations.

7 So in balancing a project that may help
8 lampreys and steelhead, how do you justify that when
9 your -- all of the other alternatives for ensuring
10 long-term regional water, security for this area,
11 balance, I think, is a hard thing to justify.

12 Thanks for your time.

13 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

14 Okay. Next I have Nikole Whipple.

15 NIKOLE WHIPPLE: My name is Nikole
16 Whipple, N-i-k-o-l-e, W-h-i-p-p-l-e, and I am a
17 member of the Round Valley Indian Tribes. Today I'm
18 representing Save California Salmon.

19 I thank you for the time to come to share
20 my public comments and my concerns for our -- for
21 our river. I would -- you know, I would like to
22 share with you that as a tribal member, I am a Yuki
23 descendant, and that the Potter Valley Project sits
24 on the -- on a site of the Yuki Tribe.

25 We are an anomaly in our language and one

1 of the oldest tribes around, and, you know, I had
2 the privilege of working with our tribal community
3 to change the name of Hastings Law School, where
4 there's a bill that says that, you know, we will be
5 respected and provide reparations and the care of
6 our ancestral territories will be given priority.

7 And, again, thank you for allowing me to
8 stand here and to speak. And I also would like to
9 thank the Water Board for all of your dedicated work
10 in upholding our tribal people's cultural resources
11 as well as tribal beneficial uses.

12 And when we're looking at the -- the need
13 for the dam removal and looking at this project, I
14 would like to share that there is no alternative for
15 our tribal cultural resources and our tribal
16 beneficial uses. The dams need to come down and
17 they need to come down quickly.

18 I'd also like to, you know, point out
19 that, you know, just after one month after the
20 Klamath Dam came down and, you know, I sat in many
21 Water Board meetings for hours on end listening to
22 the science, the Western science of maybe -- maybe
23 they'll come back in 10 years, maybe they'll come
24 back in 100 years, because it's been that long since
25 they've been able to travel. But in one month, our

1 fisheries returned.

2 And that's what brings me here to ask that
3 this process, like the Klamath Dam, you know, our --
4 our -- and those tribes in that watershed, we
5 deserve to have a free-flowing river and to have our
6 fisheries and our cultural resources returned to us
7 so that we can start healing and really working on
8 climate resiliency restoration.

9 So, you know, my ask of you today is to
10 make this process quick, you know, make it happen in
11 a time where our fisheries won't be harmed.

12 We know that there will be a time where
13 the water quality is very poor and there will be --
14 you know, there is going to be some loss, but the
15 long-term effects will be great and we will have our
16 fisheries returned, as well as water quality.

17 Water quality in the Eel River, you know,
18 is dependent on those -- the -- the free-flowing
19 water, and we have a number -- we have -- like we
20 have over five different tribes who are connected to
21 the Eel River who depend on our fisheries that have
22 been withheld from us for over 100 years.

23 I would like to point out that, you know,
24 as a tribal member I have been working boots on the
25 ground and living in Lake County to work on

1 restoration and capacity building work leading up to
2 not only this project but also fire resiliency.

3 The -- during the complex fire that some
4 of our other commenters have spoke about, it has
5 been my ability to learn how the fire effects of the
6 watershed created this complex fire to grow
7 aggressively, and where at the Potter Valley Project
8 we're, you know, thankful that, you know, not -- the
9 community was not harmed, but the fire effects in
10 the draining and the sucking of all of the water
11 supply and that watershed show in the complex fire
12 where the fire aggressively attacked the areas where
13 there were non-native species, which are high fuels,
14 heavy fuels that created the fire to move, allowed
15 the fire to move more.

16 I'd also like to point out that as -- that
17 I have been living in Lake County for the past two
18 years, and in this last -- in the beginning of
19 September, the Clear Lake experienced a fish kill.
20 This fish kill was determined to be because of the
21 oxygenated water.

22 And so as we talk about raising dams and
23 the stress and the lethal and non-lethal other ways
24 the fisheries related to warm water, you know, this
25 -- this is happening all over and in Clear Lake

1 itself.

2 And so I would just like to ask, you know,
3 the -- the Water Board truly consider the tribal
4 consultation process reaching out to all tribal
5 members, all tribal groups, and, you know, upholding
6 the tribal beneficial uses and CEQA process in that
7 government-to-government, as well as allowing time
8 for the tribes to document our tribal cultural
9 resources and tribal beneficial uses.

10 Because of the 100-year stint of us having
11 our lands being taken away and our water, you know,
12 taken away and our fisheries, it's been difficult
13 for us to be able to share or document what our
14 tribal cultural resources are.

15 So while there are protected species like
16 our salmon, which we're thankful for that they are
17 protected and that we are able to speak on them and
18 help support and return them, there are many, many
19 other cultural -- tribal cultural resources that are
20 not documented as -- because our tribal people are
21 trying to protect them, when in these riparian zones
22 those -- there's no reason why we should be having
23 to protect species that are supposed to be in these
24 riparian areas and places.

25 I thank you for your time again, and rig

1 the gill.

2 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

3 Next up, I have Nancy Todd, followed by
4 Mike Shaver.

5 NANCY TODD: Nancy, the regular way, Todd,
6 T-o-d-d. I live along the Russian River as it flows
7 out of the Potter Valley, and I operate an Airbnb
8 there. It's a source of financial support for
9 myself and my disabled son and his children.

10 I feel a little bit like an endangered
11 species myself in that now I probably should rename
12 my Airbnb, which is currently called River House, I
13 should probably start calling it the Newer Tea House
14 because that's what's coming by right now out of the
15 Potter Valley is something that doesn't much look
16 like water.

17 Okay. And I know that back 100 years ago
18 in Potter Valley the Thornton family, who were into
19 dry land farming, as has been mentioned, and were
20 making good money growing watermelon, were unable to
21 do that anymore after the diversion began and the
22 water table began to drop in the valley, and they
23 sued PG&E, and they were successful in that lawsuit.

24 And I know that Steve Elliott, who has --
25 who runs the Potter Valley Irrigation District, has

1 a copy of that lawsuit. Some years later -- what --
2 what the lawsuit said was that PG&E had to come in
3 and create check dams that would slow down the flow
4 of the water through the valley and the rate at
5 which it was cutting the water table down.

6 So they won that suit. And then some
7 years later they sued them again because PG&E wasn't
8 taking care of the check dams, and so they had to do
9 that. So there's a precedent for that.

10 And I -- when I look at the list of all
11 the endangered species that we should be concerned
12 about in the environment, I submit that humans are
13 one of those, and an environment has been created in
14 which we are dependent on this flow of the water,
15 and I think that PG&E bears the responsibility for
16 the consequences that their current position is
17 going to have on our lives.

18 Thank you.

19 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

20 Mike Shaver.

21 And I'm just going to flag ahead. Andrew
22 Nicoll after that.

23 If there's anybody else that would like to
24 provide comments today, if you could fill out a
25 speaker card. Thank you.

1 MR. MIKE SHAVER: Mike Shaver with the
2 Potter Valley Tribe. M-i-k-e. S-h-a-v-e-r. That's
3 with a V, not an F.

4 The Potter Valley Tribe, as you would
5 probably assume from the name, is right in the
6 middle of the project. The project diversion goes
7 right through our community.

8 The Potter Valley Tribe is unique in the
9 sense that they have lands in both watersheds. We
10 are set on both sides of the ridgeline. We have
11 lands on the Eel River that we utilize for
12 recreation, and then also we have lands in the
13 Potter Valley, East Fork, the Russian River, that
14 are residential small-scale farming.

15 So the tribe has interest in both sides of
16 the pipe. I guess I -- I realize that this is only
17 a scoping meeting, meaning it's just the start of
18 the process, but it appears to me that to some
19 degree we have a cart in front of the horse.

20 It's hard to make comments on mitigation
21 when they haven't had -- they really developed the
22 plans yet. You have a list of plans to kind of
23 break that out, but the plans related to water
24 quality protection, such as their erosion control
25 plan and their BMPs, you'd think those would need to

1 be drawn out a little bit more, fleshed out a little
2 bit more, before making a decision on water quality
3 certification.

4 Looking back to your own comments, it's
5 always good to see the State Water Agency's
6 comments. The State of California does have a
7 strong water board.

8 So looking back to your own agency's
9 comments from March 3rd, your number 3 comment was
10 to have more detail in the plans before you could
11 move forward in certification, and I don't see much
12 different -- there's a list in the plan, but there's
13 not that detail that your own agency commented back
14 in March in comment number 3.

15 And then also comment number 9 from your
16 March 3rd comments regarding the Tule Elk
17 protection, you described that there should be some
18 measures for habitat, restoration and protection
19 during the construction phases, and then their final
20 release in July still has no more detail.

21 So that's an example of how they continued
22 to have the same level of detail from their initial
23 to the final.

24 Regarding the steps of their project, they
25 are referring to a rapid dam removal, which flushes

1 the sediments out to the ocean, kind of moves it out
2 of the system, which I kind of questioned at first.

3 But looking into the Klamath River
4 studies, which has occurred and we referenced
5 earlier this morning, it appears even up there their
6 goal is to kind of flush the sediments and get them
7 out of the rocks, get them out of the -- get them
8 out of the riparian corridor, move the sediments
9 down the river.

10 So that does seem like the most accepted
11 practice, which I kind of questioned at first. I
12 thought we were trying to stabilize the sediments,
13 but I guess the portion of the sediments in the
14 river channel itself is best to flush away.

15 Looking at the steps of this rapid dam
16 removal in their project description, this is in
17 PG&E's final application, they described the first
18 year that they remove the upper portion of the Scott
19 Dam and then allow the way it flows to flush the
20 sediment away from the lower portions buried
21 underneath the lake sediments. And then the second
22 year, they would then remove the concrete that was
23 previously buried under sediments.

24 I guess I bring up that option, or it
25 should be at least explored by your agency, the

1 alternative kind of portion of the sediments
2 covering the lower portions of the dam being
3 mechanically removed and hauled away to an upland
4 location for stabilization.

5 This would require more work and movement,
6 but that might be ability to move some of the
7 sediment out of that transport.

8 Okay. Sorry for the long notes. I should
9 make better notes the night before.

10 Going back to your -- well, I guess I'll
11 just say through the final application, it appears
12 they have different actions it'll impact, and they
13 refer you back to -- and I thank you for your
14 presentation this morning -- the restoration policy.

15 It seems like their one mitigation measure
16 is that they're going to have long-term benefits.
17 One of the examples is the impacts to aquatic life.
18 They anticipate all fish and aquatic resources will
19 be eliminated, killing all life in the river for at
20 least 50 miles.

21 That seems like an extreme impact in the
22 environment, and there should be mitigation measures
23 listed. You might have that occur, but you think
24 there'd be some kind of a commitment that the
25 following years, the next few years, they would do

1 restoration activities to help repair that impact to
2 that 50 miles of river.

3 And then moving on to contaminants. I'll
4 just lastly refer to your March 3rd comment letter
5 again, comment number 20, you refer to the known
6 mercury levels and mercury sediments in Lake
7 Pillsbury and that they should be monitored, should
8 be sampled before removal of construction, monitored
9 -- monitored during any sediment movement, and
10 monitored afterwards.

11 Their final application still does not
12 give any description of how they would monitor that.
13 I would recommend that they would test prior to
14 removal of any sediments and then monitored
15 throughout the first three years of transport.

16 The Pottery Valley Tribe, my department,
17 we do water quality monitoring monthly on the east
18 fork of the Russian River between the two dams, and
19 we even go above Lake Pillsbury to get the river
20 before it becomes innovated or held in the lake so
21 we're actually getting river water and not lake
22 water moving down the river.

23 We do seasonal tests for contaminants, and
24 we've found arsenic in the water in all sites below
25 Lake Pillsbury, but not above Lake Pillsbury. So we

1 have a feeling that arsenic is also building up in
2 the lake in addition to the mercury that's known
3 there.

4 So I guess we would recommend the
5 monitoring for water quality for contaminants
6 transported with these sediments for the first
7 several years.

8 And this is -- lastly, the diversions.
9 The plan kind of describes that in the long-term
10 operation in this new -- new facility, they would
11 catch the high water and not impact the base below
12 for fisheries. That high water is when the
13 sediments are flushing.

14 So we have concerns on the other side of
15 the hill that when you're -- the first few years you
16 should not have diversions occur during these high-
17 flow sediment flushing. Otherwise, we would be
18 transporting that mercury arsenic-laden sediments
19 from the Eel River watershed into the Russian River
20 watershed.

21 Thank you for your time.

22 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

23 And, Andrew. And it looks like we have
24 another speaker after you. If you can stay in the
25 spotlight for a little bit.

1 If you can state and spell your name
2 first.

3 ANDREW NICOLL: Andrew Nicoll, N-i-c-o-l-
4 l. I'm just a landowner on the Russian River for
5 many years, and I understand that your goal here is
6 to analyze the effects that this project might have
7 on the river and the watershed and so on.

8 And I just, you know, want to make sure
9 that you look at all of the impacts downstream that
10 this river provides. The one benefit I hear tossed
11 back and forth about this project that we're going
12 to see is an improvement to the fish population.

13 And, of course, we all want to see that,
14 but the more you learn about this project, it's
15 probably going to destroy the fish population for
16 many years to come.

17 And during your analysis of this project,
18 you got to consider the fact that this isn't just
19 going to affect the small area where the lakes and
20 the dams are. This is going to affect people all
21 the way down the Russian River, Mendocino County,
22 Sonoma County, Lake County, Marin County, all these
23 water districts that have learned to rely on this
24 water to supply the residential uses of all of the
25 wineries that have grown up in the Russian River

1 Valley.

2 You know, the impacts -- negative impacts
3 of this are huge. People aren't going to be
4 irrigating their lawns, which raises fire danger in
5 our residential neighborhoods. Wineries are going
6 to be drilling deeper and deeper to get the water
7 they need, which is going to affect the aquifers.

8 You know, all of these impacts need to be
9 studied before you rely on one benefit of improving
10 the fish, which sounds a little shaky to me.

11 To people that live along this river, this
12 sort of looks like PG&E came in here 100 years ago,
13 manipulated the river's watersheds to their
14 benefits, at some point, they decided it wasn't
15 making enough money, and now they want to wash their
16 hands of it and walk away, and that doesn't really
17 seem appropriate here.

18 The 100 years of use of that water have to
19 be considered. And if in your analysis you're
20 taking into account that all of a sudden this fancy,
21 new, very expensive alternative diversion is going
22 to take place and replace all of this water that
23 we're going to miss, this plan doesn't provide for
24 that.

25 You said it yourself. Your impact

1 statement doesn't even go into that at all. So you
2 have to analyze the effects of this, taking into
3 account that there's going to be zero diversion, and
4 the fact that it's going to dry up the Russian River
5 and Lake Mendocino completely during the summer
6 months.

7 And I also think that you got to take a
8 look at what it's going to do to the Lower Eel
9 River. All those water holes all down that river
10 are going to dry up too. There's no dams to supply
11 that river. So you've got a big job to analyze the
12 negative impacts and make sure that your benefits
13 outweigh those.

14 Thank you for your time.

15 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

16 Do you need --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Yeah.

18 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay. I'm sorry. I can't

19 --

20 JEANNIE FULTON: Fulton, F-u-l --

21 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay. Okay. Can ---

22 JEANNIE FULTON: Yes, I will.

23 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

24 Thank you.

25 JEANNIE FULTON: Hi, my name is Jeannie

1 Fulton. I'm with the Humboldt County Farm Bureau.
2 J-e-a-n-n-i-e, Fulton, F-u-l-t-o-n.

3 I appreciate the opportunity to be here
4 this morning. I wasn't able to attend the meeting
5 last night in Fortuna, which was much closer to
6 home, but I always appreciate a drive on 101 and a
7 visit to Schat's Bakery, so I won't turn that down.

8 We have -- we have a few concerns. We
9 have quite a few concerns, actually. Some of the
10 biggest ones are those unintended consequences of
11 the dam removal. We recognize a lot of the -- of
12 the good things that can come of this.

13 We're very pro fish habitat restoration
14 and we're very pro ecological restoration as well.
15 And I think it's important to point out that the Eel
16 River is still recovering from those catastrophic
17 floods in 1955 and 1964 that have drastically
18 changed the landscape of the river.

19 And the Lower Eel River, we do rely on
20 those -- those fall -- those late summer and fall
21 water releases for our farmers and ranchers in the
22 Lower Eel River. And it's also important that --
23 and I'm sure you all are more than aware of it than
24 I am -- but our Eel River has the highest average
25 recorded annual suspended sediment yield per square

1 mile of drainage of any river of its size and
2 larger.

3 It is 15 times more so than the
4 Mississippi and four times more so than the Colorado
5 River. That's a lot of sediment coming down.

6 You know, dam removal is going to increase
7 that. We're worried about what's behind those dams
8 and that sediment that's going to be coming to that
9 Lower Eel River.

10 We've heard lots of different theories
11 from lots of different experts, and the main answer
12 that we keep getting is that the modeling isn't
13 complete. That's a little worrisome. We have a lot
14 of concerns.

15 We're also -- you know, that Lower Eel, if
16 you've traveled through Fortuna and have seen that
17 section, it's very, very wide, and we're suffering
18 from a lot of bank destabilization.

19 What we would like to see is we would like
20 to see those banks stabilized. We would like to see
21 the aggregate removed from the middle of the river.
22 Obviously, as water comes down, the water has a --
23 it's an easier path to cut into the bank than it is
24 to go down that river stream in the middle where
25 those bigger rocks are to push through. It's going

1 with the path of least resistance.

2 We're hoping for bank stabilization and a
3 deeper channel so we can have deeper water, colder
4 water, to help those -- help with the fish as well.
5 We're worried about future flow restrictions, and
6 we're really concerned about the water storage that
7 is going to be lost because of this dam removal.

8 You know, the state hasn't quite caught up
9 to that with its regulations on how long water can
10 be stored for farming activity and obviously fire as
11 well.

12 We'll submit a formal letter, but we just
13 wanted to make sure that we were present at this and
14 wanted to thank you for the opportunity to be here
15 and to speak our concerns, so thank you.

16 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

17 I have no more speaker cards.

18 Is there anyone else who would like to
19 make a comment today?

20 Okay. Please state and spell your name
21 first.

22 PETE HALSTAD: Hello, my name is Pete
23 Halstad, Pete, H-a-l-s-t-a-d, no E. I think my
24 comment is probably redundant or a summary of a lot
25 of things I've already heard, but I noted that one

1 of the issues that you'll be, you know, addressing
2 is cultural -- impact on cultural resources.

3 And under that heading I would urge, along
4 with several of the other speakers, that the
5 cultural -- the impact of the project on the
6 cultural resources represented by the entrenched and
7 diverse culture population of the towns and cities
8 and farming and businesses of the entire Russian
9 River watershed, the impact of the project and the
10 greatly increased cost and the significantly reduced
11 amount of water be taken into consideration.

12 Thank you.

13 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

14 Do we have any other speakers that would
15 make -- like to make a comment today?

16 If you could please state and spell your
17 name.

18 DAKOTA PEREZ: Dakota Perez, the Yurok
19 Tribe -- D-a-k-o-t-a, as in the state, Perez, P-e-r-
20 e-z. I'm a Yurok Tribal member, a Pomo descendant.

21 Just some things I'd like to state. You
22 know, something that I'd like to acknowledge is that
23 we are on Pomo land, the land we're standing on.

24 The land we are in here talking today is Pomo land.

25 Some of the comments that I've heard

1 today, and I just would like to talk about those a
2 little bit, the Klamath Dam removal. This is the
3 Eel River. It is not the Klamath Dam.

4 But the Klamath Dam removal is a model for
5 dam removal projects that are successful to improve
6 some -- some of the habitat, some of the spawning,
7 and water quality issues. The Eel River does have
8 water quality issues, turbidity, fresh water, you
9 know, for all of the blooms.

10 I would just like to ask the water board
11 to branch out to the tribes that are around in the
12 area. You know, don't just check off the list, Oh,
13 I talked to one tribe member.

14 Really do your due diligence in consulting
15 with these tribes that are affected by this and have
16 the cultural resources affected because this -- the
17 Eel River does not only -- you know, historically
18 has not only just been lamprey and steelhead.

19 There are many other species that are
20 endangered in that river just sitting along there in
21 the stream. There are a lot of different things to
22 take into account that with removing this dam.

23 And one last thing that I would like to
24 talk about too is the fact that people are saying or
25 questioning whether or not the salmon are more

1 important than humans. And I'm not going to answer
2 whether or not salmon are more important than
3 humans.

4 But I would like to state that it's been
5 far too long that the human impact has made on
6 salmon and we're seeing it. These species are
7 endangered. They're dying.

8 With the Klamath Dam removal project, it's
9 model, there's over 7,000 salmon that have come back
10 and are going back to their natural spawning
11 grounds. So let that be a model. Think about that.

12 And, yeah, I just wanted to make those
13 statements. Please do your due diligence in
14 consulting with tribes.

15 Thank you.

16 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

17 Do we have any other commenters today?

18 Okay. I just want to reiterate comment
19 deadline is November 3rd at 4:00 p.m. for anyone who
20 wants to submit written comments. I really
21 appreciate everyone showing up today and
22 participating, and safe travels wherever you may be
23 going next.

24 Yes, sir.

25 PUBLIC COMMENT: Do the cards we handed

1 you, do those constitute written comments?

2 ERIN RAGAZZI: If you wrote comments on
3 the card, then yes. So the question was do the
4 cards count as comments? If you wrote comments on
5 those cards, yes, we will consider those as
6 comments.

7 Okay. Thank you, everyone.

8 (WHEREUPON, the Public Scoping Meeting
9 concluded at 12:43 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, Spencer Fortin, do hereby certify that I reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing matter and that the foregoing transcript pages constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said proceedings to the best of my ability.

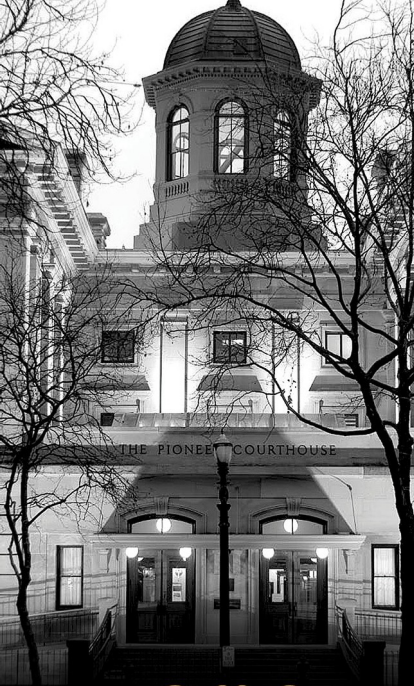
I further certify that I am neither related to counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any interest in the outcome of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 30th day of October, 2025.



Spencer Fortin

Certificate No. 2405



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POTTER VALLEY HYDROELECTRIC
PROJECT SURRENDER AND
DECOMMISSIONING

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2025
5:33 P.M.

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1 APPEARANCES

2
3 ON BEHALF OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER BOARDS:

4 Nathan Fisch, Senior Environmental Scientist

5 Wilhelmina Chon, Environmental Scientist,

6 Project Manager

7 Erin Ragazzi Assistant Deputy Director

8 Parker Thaler, Project Manager

9 Dana Heinrich, Esquire, Office of Chief Counsel

10 Shannon Luoma, Regulatory Section Manager,

11 Kleinschmidt Associates

12 Carissa Shoemaker, Licensing Coordinator,

13 Kleinschmidt Associates

14
15 PUBLIC COMMENTERS

16 Richard Maas

17 William Spita

18 Neil Hancock

19 Rue Furch

20 Joseph Byron

21 Stephen Welling

1 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

2 HELD ON

3 WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2025

4 5:33 P.M.

5
6 NATHAN FISCH: All right. Well, good
7 evening, everyone. Thank you for being here.

8 My name is Nathan Fisch. I'm a senior
9 environmental scientist at the California State
10 Water Resources Control Board in the Division of
11 Water Rights.

12 This is the third of four public meetings
13 we're holding to provide an opportunity for feedback
14 on the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental
15 Impact Report for the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
16 Project and Decommissioning.

17 Please note this meeting is being
18 transcribed by our court reporter, Spencer, over
19 there, and the transcript will be posted on the
20 project website in the coming weeks.

21 So I want to introduce the State Water
22 Board team we have here today.

23 So to my right is Wilhelmina Chon, our
24 environmental scientist and project manager for
25 Potter Valley.

1 To her right is Parker Thaler, our program
2 manager in the Water Quality Certification Program.

3 To his right is Erin Ragazzi, one of our
4 assistant -- oh, sorry. Erin is at the end. She's
5 one of our assistant deputy directors.

6 And then to Parker's right is Dana
7 Heinrich, our attorney in the Office of Chief
8 Counsel.

9 So what's the plan for today? So in a few
10 minutes I'm going to hand things over to Wilhelmina,
11 who will provide some background information on the
12 State Water Board and water quality certifications.

13 Then we'll provide a brief overview of the
14 California Environmental Quality Act process and how
15 the public can stay involved. Then we'll walk
16 through an overview of the Potter Valley
17 Hydroelectric Project and PG&E's surrender
18 application.

19 And then we'll discuss how everyone can
20 stay informed with the State Water Board's process.
21 And finally, we'll open the floor to receive verbal
22 comments from anyone in the room here today.

23 Next slide.

24 So a couple of meeting logistics before we
25 get started. Everyone came in through the front.

1 Bathrooms are through this door and to the right.
2 There's also a water fountain over there. If you
3 need it during the meeting, feel free.

4 In the event of an emergency, please go
5 out the way you came back in and wait until the all
6 clear, and we'll come back and restart the meeting.

7 So a couple more meeting logistics.
8 Please silence any electronic devices for the
9 duration of today's meeting. Please respect all
10 speakers and their points of view. Everyone's
11 taking time out of their day to be here today.

12 And as a reminder, again, today's meeting
13 is being transcribed by a court reporter, so please
14 do your best to enunciate, give your name, and spell
15 it for the court reporter.

16 If anyone is having trouble seeing the
17 presentation, please flag us down. We have a couple
18 hard copies so you can follow along with the
19 presentation. And lastly, please save all public
20 comments until the public comment period at the end
21 of the presentation.

22 And so with that, I will hand it over to
23 Wilhelmina.

24 WILHELMINA CHON: Hi, everyone. Thank you
25 for joining us today. My name is Wilhelmina Chon,

1 and I'm an environmental scientist in the Division
2 of Water Rights, and project manager for Potter
3 Valley.

4 So why is the State Water Board involved?
5 The State Water Board has authority over water
6 rights and water quality in California. Our mission
7 is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of
8 California's water resources, as well as protect and
9 allocate water for many beneficial uses.

10 We are here today because Section 401 of
11 the Clean Water Act requires that any applicant
12 seeking a federal license or permit where the
13 proposed activity may result in a discharge to
14 surface water, it is required to obtain a water
15 quality certification from the State Water Board.

16 The State Water Board conditions
17 hydroelectric projects via water quality
18 certifications to ensure the protection of the
19 State's waters.

20 Now I'd like to go over water quality
21 certifications and how they are related to the
22 federal license surrender order.

23 Water quality certifications focus on
24 protecting water quality and beneficial uses of
25 water. If a water quality certification is issued,

1 the conditions in it become a mandatory part of the
2 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC
3 license or FERC surrender order for the project.

4 Water quality certifications ensure that a
5 project will comply with water quality objectives
6 and beneficial uses as outlined in the Regional
7 Water Quality Control Plans, also known as Basin
8 Plans.

9 In this case, the North Coast Regional
10 Water Quality Control Plan as adopted by the North
11 Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

12 Certifications must also include
13 conditions to ensure compliance with water quality
14 control policies and other applicable requirements
15 of state law. For example, the certification will
16 require compliance with the Board's Dredge or Fill
17 Procedures to ensure protection of state's waters,
18 including wetlands.

19 PG&E plans to apply for a water quality
20 certification for its proposed project. The State
21 Water Board is non-positional and will act on the
22 application for water quality certification that we
23 anticipate receiving.

24 However, before the State Water Board can
25 issue a water quality certification, it must first

1 comply with the California Environmental Quality
2 Act, which I'll go over later.

3 The North Coast Regional Water Quality
4 Control Board adopted the Policy in Support of
5 Restoration in the North Coast Region on January 29,
6 2015. The Restoration Policy states that the Boards
7 may permit or certify restoration projects that
8 result in significant and sometimes unavoidable
9 impacts if it is shown that the project will result
10 in long-term protection of beneficial uses and water
11 quality.

12 Under the Restoration Policy, temporary
13 exceedances in temperature, turbidity, or other
14 water quality objectives in project-affected water
15 bodies can be authorized as long as it is shown that
16 the project will result in long-term beneficial --
17 sorry -- long-term protection of beneficial uses and
18 water quality objectives.

19 And that leads us to the California
20 Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA. CEQA informs
21 the State Water Board and the public about the
22 proposed project's potentially significant
23 environmental effects and ways to avoid, minimize,
24 or mitigate those impacts.

25 Since PG&E is not a public agency, the

1 State Water Board will be the lead agency for CEQA
2 and will prepare the CEQA document. In this case,
3 the State Water Board will be preparing a type of
4 CEQA document called an Environmental Impact Report,
5 or EIR.

6 The CEQA document will be used to support
7 the conditions in the water quality certification
8 for the proposed project. Generally, the State
9 Water Board cannot issue a water quality
10 certification without completing CEQA.

11 So the purpose of CEQA scoping is to
12 identify potentially significant environmental
13 impacts associated with the proposed project.

14 Comments received during scoping meetings
15 help determine the scope of environmental review as
16 well as identify potential project alternatives and
17 mitigation measures for potentially significant
18 impacts that may arise from the project.

19 This flowchart provides a high-level
20 overview of the State Water Board's CEQA process.
21 After an Environmental Impact Report is deemed
22 necessary, the State Water Board conducts scoping
23 meetings such as this one to solicit public input to
24 help in the development of the report.

25 When ready, a draft Environmental Impact

1 Report will be released for public comment for a
2 minimum of 45 days.

3 After the public comment period concludes,
4 the State Water Board will then review and respond
5 to any public input that was received. Lastly, the
6 State Water Board will issue a final Environmental
7 Impact Report for the project.

8 Next, I will provide a brief overview of
9 the Potter Valley Project.

10 The Potter Valley Project is owned and
11 operated by PG&E and is located on the Eel River and
12 East Branch Russian River in Lake and Mendocino
13 Counties. The nearest city is Ukiah, which is
14 approximately 15 miles southwest of the Potter
15 Valley Powerhouse.

16 This is an existing project, which is
17 comprised of Scott Dam, Lake Pillsbury, Potter
18 Valley Powerhouse, Cape Horn Dam, Van Arsdale
19 Reservoir, and several recreation areas.

20 Water diverted from the Eel River is --
21 sorry.

22 Water from the Eel River is diverted at
23 Cape Horn Dam and is discharged to the East Branch
24 Russian River.

25 Prior to 2022, PG&E looked for a new owner

1 of the project but was unable to find one.
2 Therefore, PG&E made the decision to surrender and
3 decommission the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
4 Project.

5 In May and June 2022, PG&E, at the request
6 of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, filed
7 an initial plan and schedule to submit a Surrender
8 and Decommissioning Plan.

9 PG&E submitted their final surrender
10 application to FERC in July 2025 and intends to
11 apply for a water quality certification. Again
12 reiterating, that the State Water Board is non-
13 positional and will act on the application for water
14 quality certification that we anticipate receiving.

15 Today's meeting is meant to solicit public
16 input that can inform the development of the State
17 Water Board's CEQA document.

18 Now I will provide an overview of the
19 Potter Valley License Surrender and Decommissioning
20 Project. As part of the proposed project, PG&E is
21 requesting to surrender and decommission the Potter
22 Valley Hydroelectric Project with the Federal Energy
23 Regulatory Commission.

24 The proposed project involves removal of
25 Scott and Cape Horn Dams and associated facilities,

1 followed by restoration of former lake areas.

2 In addition, PG&E is proposing to leave
3 the diversion facilities in place for future
4 diversions by a different party. I'll cover that in
5 a later slide.

6 Recreational facilities will either be
7 removed, restored, or transferred to another party.
8 Finally, the project includes 41 proposed plans and
9 measures, some developed and some to be developed,
10 which will be shown on the next slide.

11 PG&E has proposed the following 41 plans
12 and measures as part of their surrender and
13 decommissioning plan. I won't go over each plan and
14 measure in detail today, but if you would like more
15 information or the full list of plans, please see
16 the Notice of Preparation issued on September 22,
17 2025.

18 The Notice of Preparation is also
19 available on our Potter Valley webpage, and the web
20 address will be shown at the end of the
21 presentation.

22 CEQA helps us to identify which
23 potentially significant impacts the project may
24 have. The State Water Board expects that a number
25 of potentially significant impacts may occur as a

1 result of the proposed project. The resources on
2 the slide are part of a preliminary and non-
3 exhaustive list that would be potentially
4 significantly impacted by the project.

5 Please note, there is a concurrent project
6 separate from PG&E's surrender and decommissioning
7 project that is not a part of this CEQA process.
8 That project is called the New Eel Russian Facility,
9 or NERF, and the Eel Russian Project Authority will
10 be the CEQA lead for that project.

11 The Authority is expected to seek a
12 separate water quality certification for the NERF in
13 the future. If you'd like more information, please
14 contact the Eel Russian Project Authority directly.
15 And I believe we have David Manning here, so if
16 anyone has any questions, please ask him.

17 NATHAN FISCH: Thanks, Wilhelmina.

18 Now I'd like to discuss some options to
19 provide comments. So if you'd like to provide
20 comments today, there are speaker cards near the
21 entrance, you probably saw, where you can indicate
22 whether you would like to speak or provide written
23 comments by not checking the oral comments box.

24 After you've filled out the card, please
25 flag one of us down. We'll collect them. On those

1 comment cards, you can include your name and your --
2 any affiliation you may have.

3 Since we expect multiple people to provide
4 comments, please provide your comments to the
5 allotted time that we'll let you know what that is
6 once we get there.

7 And as a reminder, we're expecting --
8 we're accepting written comments up until November
9 3rd that carry the same weight as any written or
10 oral comments we receive today.

11 So back to you, Wilhelmina.

12 WILHELMINA CHON: So the State Water Board
13 is seeking comments on project alternatives,
14 potentially significant impacts, mitigation
15 measures, and anything related to the project to
16 help us in the development of an Environmental
17 Impact Report.

18 We plan to evaluate PG&E's proposed
19 project and a range of alternatives. Any input on
20 specific project alternatives will be -- would be
21 helpful. Other comments regarding potential impacts
22 of the project and potential mitigation measures to
23 lessen those impacts would be helpful as well.

24 All public comments submitted by November
25 3, 2025, will be considered. Once the draft EIR is

1 released, there will be another public review and
2 comment period to solicit input for that document.

3 This slide provides ways to stay informed
4 and up to date with the project. The State Water
5 Board will continue to update the Potter Valley
6 Hydroelectric Project webpage with information and
7 filings regarding the CEQA and water quality
8 certification process. The site URL for the Potter
9 Valley Hydroelectric Project is shown on the current
10 slide.

11 On the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
12 webpage, you can also find the Notice of Preparation
13 that we issued on September 22, 2025. The Notice of
14 Preparation has information on how to subscribe to
15 our online notification system called Gov Delivery.

16 If you sign up, Gov Delivery will send you
17 emails related to the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
18 Project and other projects pursuing certifications
19 managed by the Division of Water Rights.

20 As a reminder, we are accepting written
21 comments until 4:00 p.m. on November 3, 2025,
22 regarding the range of alternatives, potentially
23 significant effects, and mitigation measures that
24 should be analyzed in the Environmental Impact
25 Report.

1 Directions on how to submit comments by
2 email or hard copy mail are shown on the slide.

3 Thank you for your attention. Before we
4 open the floor to public comments, I would like to
5 go over some reminders.

6 Please use the microphone to speak, and
7 only one speaker at a time. Please be sure to state
8 and spell your name out for the court reporter
9 before providing your comments.

10 Please stick to your allotted time and
11 respect all speakers' points of view. And if you do
12 not wish to speak today, you can also provide
13 written comments up until November 3, 2025.

14 And with that, I'll pass it over to Erin.

15 ERIN RAGAZZI: So just some reminders
16 before we open it up to public comment. Please come
17 up and use this microphone right here. That is
18 really important, mainly so that we can get your
19 comments on the record, so Spencer has that
20 information in his transcript.

21 I'm going to repeat this every time
22 someone comes up, so I'm going to ask you to say
23 your name and then spell it so that we get that in
24 the record correctly.

25 We're going to start off with six minutes,

1 mainly because if you're talking more than six
2 minutes, I want other people to have an opportunity
3 to talk. If people want to come up and make
4 additional comments after that, that's -- well,
5 you're then welcome to do so once everyone has had
6 an opportunity to speak this evening.

7 I have a few comment cards. Are there
8 additional people who would like comment cards or
9 are there additional comment cards?

10 Okay. We'll come grab them from you.

11 Our first speaker is going to be Richard
12 Maas.

13 Again, if you could say your name and then
14 spell it.

15 RICHARD MAAS: It's Richard Maas, M-a-a-s.
16 And actually, I was -- I was hoping I wasn't going
17 to be the first one so I could see how --

18 ERIN RAGAZZI: We can let someone --

19 RICHARD MAAS: -- it goes.

20 ERIN RAGAZZI: -- else go if you want.

21 RICHARD MAAS: Well, I'll --

22 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay.

23 RICHARD MAAS: -- wing it, but --

24 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you for being first.

25 RICHARD MAAS: Okay. So I'm a layman. I

1 don't have any particular expertise, but I've been
2 following this for a while. But I lived in Sonoma
3 County for the last 25 years, but prior to that, I
4 lived and worked in Mendocino County. And before
5 that, I was raised and born in Humboldt County.

6 Yeah. I think it's a long time coming for
7 the dams to be removed, and hopefully that project
8 will proceed smoothly, and that hopefully the Water
9 Quality Control Board will ensure that, you know,
10 that the damage will be minimized and that the net
11 long-term benefits will be worth waiting for.

12 And I know it's going to be messy with
13 removal of the dams. Certainly, I follow what's
14 been happening with the Klamath River and certainly
15 saw the -- where things were muddy and wildlife
16 died.

17 But overall, a year from since then, it
18 really has blossomed, and I'm hoping that will be
19 the same situation for the Eel River because I've
20 looked at, you know, what was it like, and I'm sure
21 you've probably heard that about the Eel River,
22 where you could almost run across the backs of
23 salmon migrating up the river.

24 So hopefully we'll get back to that.
25 Well, maybe not back to that because that's probably

1 an exaggeration, but hopefully it will recover and
2 that the efforts, you know, whether PG&E or through
3 the FERC process as well as the Water Quality
4 Control Board, looking to make sure that, you know,
5 the impact on the environment as well as for the
6 people are minimized.

7 And I think the long-term benefits will be
8 really good because, you know, there is sort of a --
9 well, I guess a vision. Like when you go to
10 Willits, you see the sign before you get there that
11 says you're entering the Eel River Watershed, and
12 it's sort of a dividing point.

13 And, you know, 100 years or so ago, they
14 decided to punch a hole through the mountain and
15 take the water. And, like I said, I'm hoping that
16 will work out for the recovery of the Eel.

17 There's also -- you mentioned the Russian
18 -- or excuse me -- the Russian -- Eel Russian
19 Project Authority that I attended their last
20 meeting. They don't seem to have very many, but I
21 attended the one a few months ago and was happy to
22 hear that at least for Mendocino County with the
23 Inland Power and Water Board and the Humboldt County
24 Board of Supervisors, the Sonoma Water Agency, as
25 well as the Round Valley Indian Tribe and the

1 California Department of Fish and Wildlife have
2 reached an understanding or sent a memo of
3 understanding where they've agreed to things.

4 There's certainly some parties that aren't
5 in agreement with it, but it sounds like most of
6 the, I'd say, the major players, probably except for
7 Lake County, have agreed to a way to divert water
8 that seemed reasonable.

9 I listened to the presentation. It got
10 pretty technical, and I said, okay, I'll trust the
11 experts there. So I feel that me being a Sonoma
12 County resident, that I will have adequate water
13 that, you know, I have to conserve a little.

14 I -- I think -- I don't mind cutting or at
15 least being more observant of my water usage so that
16 it does help the Eel River, as well as provide that
17 there's enough water for the Russian River.

18 And I know this is outside your scope, but
19 hopefully the, you know, Lake Mendocino Dam will be
20 built up higher so that they can have a little more
21 water.

22 Because I remember, actually in the 90s, I
23 went there for the first time and asked the person
24 at the gate, I said, "Well, how much of this water
25 is from the Eel River," and the -- the park ranger

1 there said, "All of it."

2 Certainly, it's changed since then, but
3 that was an awful lot of water, and hopefully
4 everyone will -- will work to conserve and work
5 together. And that's -- that's what I'm hoping.

6 And let me see here if I had any last
7 comments.

8 Yeah. One thing that also annoys me with
9 Lake Pillsbury is that that's where the Sacramento
10 pikeminnow got its start, and I'm hoping that when
11 the dam is removed that it will not be able to adapt
12 to the cooler climate of the Eel River and that it
13 will prevent that from, you know, feeding on the
14 salmon and steelhead that are in the Eel River. So
15 --

16 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

17 RICHARD MAAS: Thank you.

18 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay. Next up I have
19 Maria.

20 PUBLIC COMMENT (MARIA): I'll provide
21 written comment.

22 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay. William.

23 WILLIAM SPITA: That's me.

24 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay.

25 ERIN RAGAZZI: And if you can state and

1 spell your name.

2 WILLIAM SPITA: Okay. My name is William
3 Spita, S-p-i-t-a. I live here in Santa Rosa. I've
4 probably been going to Lake Pillsbury longer than
5 anybody I know. I've been going up there since
6 1948, and I know quite a bit about the lake.

7 Although, recently I haven't been there.

8 Anyway, I believe that tearing the dam
9 down is a bad idea, and I believe that basically
10 because there's a couple of things that have
11 changed. One thing is the rainfall isn't anywhere
12 what it was.

13 You know, people are comparing it, oh, the
14 salmon used to run like crazy 50 years ago. That's
15 true. But there's very little rainfall now.
16 Basically, the Eel River is going to become a
17 seasonal river, so it will probably be dry in the
18 summer. I mean, basically, the rivers above the
19 lake are pretty much dry by the end of July these
20 days.

21 I know there's comparisons made to the
22 Klamath River project. The Klamath River gets its
23 start in the Crater Lake area of Oregon where they
24 get about 40 feet of snow a year. You know, where
25 the Eel River starts above Lake Pillsbury, it

1 doesn't get anywhere near that much. You know, we
2 might get six inches of snow or something like that,
3 which is pretty much gone by June.

4 I'm very concerned about the Russian
5 River. Sonoma County gets a lot of its water from
6 the Eel River diversion. Six-hundred thousand
7 people live here. There's lots of agriculture here
8 that if we were to lose that diversion, I don't know
9 how we'd replace it.

10 They're talking about raising the Coyote
11 Dam at Mendocino by three feet. I don't think
12 that's going to make any difference.

13 But I think the main thing we need to
14 consider is the rainfall, the fact that it isn't
15 like it used to be, and we can expect much drier
16 seasons. And -- and where are we going to get our
17 water from? I think water in California is going to
18 be a major issue for the future.

19 So basically those are the points I wanted
20 to make. Thank you.

21 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

22 I think it's Jim Silvers. Did you want to
23 make a comment? There's a question mark here.

24 JIM SILVERS: Not just yet.

25 ERIN RAGAZZI: Not just yet. Okay.

1 And Neil -- I think -- oh, you do want to
2 speak, okay. And if you could state and spell your
3 name for Spencer.

4 NEIL HANCOCK: Yes, Neil Hancock. N-e-i-
5 l. Hancock, H-a-n-c-o-c-k. Thank you for taking
6 our comments on this.

7 I'm a Sonoma County resident and part of
8 some citizen groups that are examining and -- and
9 kind of reviewing what the science is and the --
10 have an interest in the ecological integrity of the
11 system.

12 So taking out the -- the dam will have
13 long-term benefits and a net positive effect. This
14 will help with the total TMDLs, enabling the fish to
15 get to the upper basin habitat. The cold water
16 that's up there is huge.

17 I hope you will manage to do this within a
18 year because the project has ongoing water quality
19 right now. I mean, the water coming out of Lake
20 Pillsbury is too warm.

21 So it would be good to try and study what
22 the sublethal impacts are to the listed salmonids in
23 continuing the project, but I guess the whole aim
24 here is to be able to access or have that cold water
25 in the Upper Eel.

1 I -- I would like to suggest also for the
2 flow analysis, when you're looking at the -- the Eel
3 and the east fork of the Russian, you only use the
4 flows that have been in the last couple of years.

5 I mean, the dams, the -- the whole
6 function of the hydroelectric scheme has failed.
7 It's not being used. So those flows from the last
8 couple of years, I think, are important to have as a
9 baseline.

10 I would hope the Water Board would apply
11 its restoration policy for this, which you
12 identified earlier, which allows for certifying
13 projects with long-term benefits despite the impacts
14 of taking out the dam or the sediment that's in
15 there. And I hope very much that there will be a
16 restoration of that area with the native plants and
17 things.

18 So thank you very much.

19 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

20 Did you -- thank you.

21 RUE FURCH: Thank you. My name is Rue
22 Furch, R-u-e, F as in Frank, u-r-c-h. I think this
23 is a scoping meeting for the Environmental Impact
24 Report.

25 Yeah? Good.

1 The environmental analysis must include
2 identification of impacts and a range of mitigations
3 to reduce impacts to the greatest extent feasible of
4 all changes to the structures and facilities
5 associated with the proposed project, identification
6 of impacts and a range of mitigations to reduce
7 impacts to the greatest extent feasible of all water
8 flow, supply and water quality resulting from
9 changes resulting from the entirety of the proposed
10 project, identification of impacts with all that
11 other stuff I just said before, with mitigations.

12 You want me to read it? I'll read it.

13 A range of impacts and a range of
14 mitigations to reduce impacts to the greatest extent
15 feasible of construction resulting from the proposed
16 project, identification of short- and long-term
17 impacts and mitigations to minimize both resulting
18 from the project, and determine the shortest path.

19 This is a second thing, that analysis must
20 determine the shortest path to project completion
21 that will result in lessening impacts to all
22 beneficial uses, including the Eel and Russian River
23 watersheds, and must identify impacts of project
24 proposal on Lake Sonoma and all beneficial uses
25 downstream.

1 Thank you.

2 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

3 Do I have any other commenters this
4 evening?

5 Jim, are you interested at this time?

6 JIM SILVERS: Not yet.

7 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay. I don't have any
8 other commenters at this time, so.

9 PUBLIC COMMENT: Okay. Thanks.

10 PUBLIC COMMENT: I have a quick question.

11 ERIN RAGAZZI: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

12 PUBLIC COMMENT: If I wanted to say
13 something now and then later provide a written
14 comment?

15 ERIN RAGAZZI: Oh, perfectly fine.

16 PUBLIC COMMENT: Okay.

17 ERIN RAGAZZI: Everyone is welcome to
18 provide verbal comments this evening and submit
19 written comments by November 3rd at 4:00 p.m. So
20 we're happy to take the same comments at that point
21 in time or new comments.

22 If you could state and spell your name.

23 JOSEPH BYRON: Okay. I am a little
24 shorter.

25 My name is Joseph Byron, J-o-s-e-p-h, B-y-

1 r-o-n.

2 (Speaking in a language other than
3 English.)

4 Greetings. My name is Joseph Byron. My
5 family and I are with Ukomno'm. We are the original
6 people of what is considered the Russian River or
7 what who we call Mulho -- Mulhotam. And I am also
8 DNA connected to the -- what's considered the
9 Russian River or Bid Pahkha. I come from both
10 areas.

11 And my family, we -- we come from the
12 headwaters of Mulho, including the middle fork of
13 the -- of the Mulhotam, the Eel River. And I just
14 wanted to encourage the undamming of our ancestor,
15 of our river, that is utilized by many today.

16 And I just want to say that for now.

17 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay. Any other commenters
18 this evening?

19 STEPHEN WELLING: I think I do -- would
20 like to speak.

21 ERIN RAGAZZI: Oh, come on up.

22 STEPHEN WELLING: Yeah. I'll start here
23 in just a minute.

24 ERIN RAGAZZI: Or you can just state your
25 name and spell it for Spencer.

1 STEPHEN WELLING: My name is Stephen
2 Welling. S-t-e-p-h-e-n. W-e-l-l-i-n-g.

3 The -- the Pillsbury area is an area that
4 I've been ever since I was just a little kid gone up
5 there, and it's been a place where our family for
6 years have gone, you know, exploring, camping,
7 whatnot, and, you know, boating.

8 I remember there was a YMCA years ago, you
9 know, going out there and having events, water
10 skiing and whatnot, but I -- I -- you know, other
11 things that are current right now, certainly fire
12 danger, having that water there, I think it's very
13 important. You know, so obviously keeping the dams
14 there.

15 But yeah, keep -- the fire danger,
16 certainly the number of residents that live down
17 this area, water security. This other gentleman
18 noted here earlier just the lack of rainfall we have
19 these -- these years compared to years ago.

20 So I -- I definitely would support, you
21 know, any measure we can to -- to keep the dam and
22 -- and have that, yeah, have that there as security
23 for future. You know, there will also be additional
24 growth over the years in the area. And just the
25 scarcity of water, I think it's definitely --

1 definitely important to -- to keep in place.

2 That's all I've got to say.

3 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you.

4 Jim, you still good?

5 Okay. Anybody else interested in
6 providing a comment this evening?

7 Okay. I really appreciate everyone coming
8 out tonight. The PowerPoint will be posted on our
9 website. The transcripts will be available at some
10 point in the future on our website. And other than
11 that, I wish everyone very safe travels home this
12 evening.

13 Did you want to make a comment, sir?

14 PUBLIC COMMENT: I just wanted to ask a
15 question.

16 ERIN RAGAZZI: Sure.

17 PUBLIC COMMENT: After the November 3rd
18 deadline, what's kind of the rough timeline for your
19 agency developing the EIR?

20 ERIN RAGAZZI: So the question was, how
21 soon are we going to develop the EIR? And we'll be
22 starting the process of developing the EIR. There's
23 other information we're going to be developing
24 concurrently with that. So there is studies and
25 other information that we need to support that

1 process.

2 PUBLIC COMMENT: Mm-hmm.

3 ERIN RAGAZZI: So and some of that will be
4 done in collaboration with working with PG&E to get
5 that information, and some of it will be done by our
6 CEQA consultants.

7 So the overall timeline will be somewhat
8 dependent on how quickly some of the plans are
9 developed, but I think we're probably about I'm
10 going to say a year and a half out from when we
11 would see a draft EIR probably at the early stage.

12 And if I'm saying that wrong, you should
13 --

14 MR. FISCH: Yeah. That's a correct
15 timeline, and I think it -- it underscores, you
16 know, the idea in NOP. We have some information on
17 how you can get on our listserv and stay involved in
18 the process. So I think, you know, I think that's a
19 good way to make sure that you are looped in when we
20 do go to a draft EIR.

21 PUBLIC COMMENT: Is that in here, how to
22 get on the list?

23 ERIN RAGAZZI: Yes. It is at the end of
24 -- it's -- it was on the stay informed slide.

25 PUBLIC COMMENT: Okay.

1 ERIN RAGAZZI: We also have a few copies
2 of the Notice of Preparation. It's in that document
3 as well. So if you want to grab one of those, we
4 can show you where it is there too.

5 PUBLIC COMMENT: So does the FERC process
6 proceed even though you haven't done your work or
7 completed your work?

8 ERIN RAGAZZI: So we're sort of ahead of
9 the game here because we are initiating --
10 initiating CEQA. FERC has not started its NEPA
11 process at this point in time. It will need to
12 complete a NEPA process, and then the Board will
13 need to issue a certification that will become a
14 condition of the license surrender order that FERC
15 ultimately issues.

16 PUBLIC COMMENT: So the license surrender
17 won't happen until your work is done? Is that --

18 ERIN RAGAZZI: Yes.

19 PUBLIC COMMENT: Oh, okay. So we're
20 looking at a year and a half?

21 ERIN RAGAZZI: Before the draft
22 Environmental Impact is out for public comment.

23 PUBLIC COMMENT: Okay. Thank you.

24 ERIN RAGAZZI: And just -- I don't know
25 how many people track FERC projects. You could

1 track our progress through our email list, which is
2 that second bullet there. FERC has its own
3 electronic process, and you can sign up for the
4 Potter Valley Project, and you'll get emails about
5 everything coming out related to the Potter Valley
6 Project from FERC. And if you want information on
7 that, one of our staff can help you out with that.

8 PUBLIC COMMENT: So the comment period for
9 FERC won't open at all until you're done with this?

10 ERIN RAGAZZI: FERC doesn't really have a
11 -- so FERC has different comment periods for
12 different documents.

13 So often on a draft document there'll be
14 an opportunity for folks to provide comment. FERC
15 doesn't put out a draft license surrender order.

16 They will have a draft NEPA document at
17 some point in time that people will be able to
18 comment on. We have no idea what FERC's timeline
19 will be. We don't control FERC. They are their own
20 federal agency.

21 And what happened in Klamath is the Board
22 did an Environmental Impact Report and then FERC
23 relied upon that in the development of its
24 environmental impact statement. I don't know if
25 that will happen here too, but it's quite possible

1 it will.

2 Great questions.

3 PUBLIC COMMENT: I --

4 ERIN RAGAZZI: Mm-hmm.

5 PUBLIC COMMENT: So I'm just going to
6 assume -- your agency, I'm not that familiar with
7 it, but I'm assuming you're covering everything from
8 the fire stuff to flows and every little detail.
9 Nothing is pretty much going to get by you guys,
10 right, to get left out?

11 ERIN RAGAZZI: Yeah. And you'll be able
12 to tell us whether or not we are doing it adequately
13 when we release the draft Environmental Impact
14 Report. So, yes, it will have all of the different
15 resource areas.

16 Fire is one that is now included in the
17 CEQA checklist, so it is explicitly analyzed, but so
18 is flow, water supply. All of those are different
19 resource areas that we'll be evaluating and
20 analyzing under CEQA, and they will all be covered
21 in that draft Environmental Impact Report that we'll
22 put out for people to comment on.

23 PUBLIC COMMENT: The Water Board is going
24 to cover fire?

25 ERIN RAGAZZI: The CEQA document will

1 cover fire. CEQA is a disclosure document. We have
2 consultants. And, yeah.

3 PUBLIC COMMENT: And how do you
4 distinguish going -- I don't know how far back you
5 would go because obviously there's been an abundance
6 of various records over the years. We'll just say a
7 few different agencies.

8 How do you guys get through this, just
9 curious, or have you got to that point yet?

10 ERIN RAGAZZI: So part of our meetings
11 today are to solicit input from folks about what
12 they think we should be doing.

13 PUBLIC COMMENT: It looks like there's
14 been several -- several, you know, different
15 records, whether they were falsified or not, that
16 everybody's saying, well, there was this many
17 salmon, there was that many salmon, how the flows
18 are.

19 ERIN RAGAZZI: So we'll take all -- we'll
20 take available information to inform the
21 Environmental Impact Report and assess that
22 information and use what we think is appropriate in
23 that document.

24 Again, it'll be out for public comment.
25 If parties believe that's not appropriate, they can

1 provide feedback on that.

2 PUBLIC COMMENT: Thank you.

3 ERIN RAGAZZI: Do you have a question?

4 PUBLIC COMMENT: Yeah. Will you guys be
5 considering with the removal of the dams and the
6 lessening of the amount of water coming into the
7 watershed, especially year-round, do you consider
8 the groundwater banking or any -- any impact to the
9 groundwater supply?

10 ERIN RAGAZZI: So groundwater is another
11 item that's in the CEQA checklist.

12 Are you able to hear all of this, Spencer?

13 THE REPORTER: Yeah. I'm just not getting
14 names of people.

15 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay.

16 PUBLIC COMMENT: Will you be coming back
17 up here after as part of the process or is this like
18 --

19 ERIN RAGAZZI: We're never coming back
20 here ever again, no. That was sarcasm. That was
21 sarcasm.

22 So, yes, we will. Once we release a draft
23 Environmental Impact Report, we will have public
24 meetings again to receive comments on the draft
25 Environmental Impact Report.

1 I don't know if it'll be exactly at this
2 venue, but we will probably be in similar, if not
3 the same, locations.

4 PUBLIC COMMENT: Thank you for doing it in
5 multiple locations.

6 ERIN RAGAZZI: Yeah.

7 And if -- if you're talking to someone and
8 they're interested in this topic, our last meeting
9 is this Friday, and that is a virtual meeting. So
10 people who are not able to attend in person can come
11 to that -- can attend that virtual meeting. We'll
12 also be recording that one so people can listen to
13 the presentation and get the information.

14 PUBLIC COMMENT: A comment I heard, and I
15 don't know if it's true or not, I'm sure you will
16 check it out, but whether the average rainfall has
17 declined or not, I -- honestly don't know, but --

18 ERIN RAGAZZI: We're taking all of this
19 feedback.

20 PUBLIC COMMENT: Yeah. But one thing I
21 can appreciate since I lost my home to a fire just a
22 few miles away and, you know, I'm not advocating
23 Mark West Creek is nearby, I'm not advocating that
24 be damned so I can use it on the chance that I get
25 burned out again, but when we came back, I mean,

1 it's -- had to meet new state requirements.

2 It's fire-hardened. We have sprinkler
3 systems in the house. The insurance companies
4 required more landscaping to, you know, meet the
5 requirements but there's less, so there's things
6 that can be done rather than say, well, we want a
7 dam in case there's a fire.

8 You know, and I think of Clear Lake. I
9 think, you know, how far away is it? And I've only
10 been to Lake Pillsbury once, but I think there is
11 other alternatives rather than just saving for that.

12 Though, I mean, I'd appreciate it if it
13 was your home. I mean, I can appreciate if you lose
14 your home. That means a lot -- a lot of those are
15 maybe vacation homes, so it's not your primary
16 residence.

17 ERIN RAGAZZI: I'm not commenting on
18 anything today, so --

19 PUBLIC COMMENT: Okay.

20 ERIN RAGAZZI: -- thank you.

21 PUBLIC COMMENT: Another question. So do
22 you guys go up there as your committee or as your
23 group or whatever, and do you look at things or look
24 at things yourself or do you have to just pretty
25 much rely on other forest engineers or agencies or

1 whatever?

2 ERIN RAGAZZI: No. Our staff have been up
3 in the watershed. They've toured the project and
4 the area a couple of times. I went up there many
5 years ago and also did that. So, yes, we -- we do
6 get up into the area.

7 PUBLIC COMMENT: You get up there and see
8 --

9 ERIN RAGAZZI: Yeah.

10 PUBLIC COMMENT: -- because of the years.
11 Some people said, oh yeah, we went up and we all
12 know they didn't. You know what I mean? Or they
13 went up just for an hour, but they, you know, they
14 didn't look at everything that people felt they
15 should, I guess. So I just didn't know if you guys
16 are just sitting there thinking, well, this is what
17 we heard, so okay. I was just curious. It's nice
18 that you guys are up there and see for yourselves.
19 That's great.

20 PUBLIC COMMENT: If you need help
21 coordinating any kind of access to any of the lands
22 in Potter Valley, the private land that the Russian
23 Res goes through, I can help facilitate that if you
24 want.

25 ERIN RAGAZZI: Okay. If you want to come

1 up and give your contact information to staff, that
2 would be great.

3 PUBLIC COMMENT: I had a clarifying
4 question. So it sounded like there is this
5 hydraulic project that's being proposed, and then I
6 also saw something regarding a removal of the dam.

7 Is -- are those two different projects
8 that can happen, or if the hydraulic project
9 happens, then the removal of the dam can't happen?
10 I just --

11 ERIN RAGAZZI: Yeah. No. It's -- it's an
12 important clarification. So the project that is
13 before the board for CEQA purposes at this point in
14 time is the decommissioning and licensed surrender
15 of the Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project.

16 So PG&E is choosing to surrender its
17 license for the hydroelectric project and
18 decommission the project. That's taking out the two
19 dams that are currently on the -- on the Eel.

20 There is a separate project that is being
21 proposed by the Eel River Project Authority, and
22 David right over there is someone you can talk to
23 about it if you want to find out more about it. So
24 that project is called NERF, the New Eel Russian
25 Facility. That is a proposal to construct a

1 diversion at the same location or similar location
2 around the same area where a diversion exists now to
3 continue to divert water into the Russian River.
4 And I'm not going to say anything more because it's
5 David's project, and you should talk to him about
6 it.

7 PUBLIC COMMENT: Okay. Thank you.

8 ERIN RAGAZZI: That project will come to
9 the Board for certification, but not for CEQA. So
10 the environmental or comprehensive environmental
11 analysis that the Board is doing for the Potter
12 Valley project, the CEQA analysis, we are doing that
13 for the Potter Valley decommissioning.

14 The Authority will be conducting the CEQA
15 analysis for that New Eel River facility. The Board
16 will eventually certify -- we'll have certification
17 applications before us for both projects, but not
18 until the CEQA part gets done.

19 PUBLIC COMMENT: Thank you.

20 ERIN RAGAZZI: Thank you, everybody.

21 PUBLIC COMMENT: Thank you.

22 THE REPORTER: The time is 6:22. Off
23 record.

24 (WHEREUPON, the Public Scoping Meeting
25 concluded at 6:22 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE

I, Spencer Fortin, do hereby certify that I reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing matter and that the foregoing transcript pages constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said proceedings to the best of my ability.

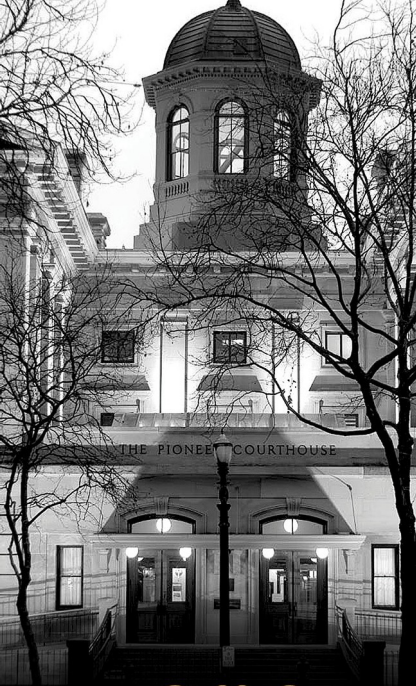
I further certify that I am neither related to counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any interest in the outcome of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 30th day of October, 2025.



Spencer Fortin

Certificate No. 2405



POTTER VALLEY HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT
SURRENDER AND DECOMMISSIONING

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING HELD ON
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2025
12:44 P.M.

1001 I STREET, SUITE 1
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1 APPEARANCES

2
3 ON BEHALF OF THE CALIFORNIA WATER BOARDS

4 Nathan Fisch, Senior Environmental Scientist

5 Wilhelmina Chon, Environmental Scientist, Project
6 Manager

7 Erin Ragazzi, Assistant Deputy Director

8 Parker Thaler, Project Manager

9 Allison Rabe, Esquire, Office of Chief Counsel

10 Dana Heinrich, Esquire, Office of Chief Counsel

11 Carissa Shoemaker, Licensing Coordinator,
12 Kleinschmidt Associates

13
14 PUBLIC COMMENTERS

15 Emily Wood, Co-director, ROAR

16 Glen Spain, Legal Counsel, PCFFA, IFR

17 Abigail Black, Save California Salmon

18 Sarah Bates, Commercial Fisherman, PCFFA, IRA

19 Nikcole Whipple, Round Valley Indian Tribes

20 Regina Chichizola, Save California Salmon
21
22
23
24
25

1 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

2 HELD ON

3 FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2025

4 12:44 P.M.

5
6 MR. FISCH: All right. Well, good
7 afternoon, everyone. Sorry for the delay. Thank
8 you for taking the time out of your day today to be
9 here with us.

10 My name is Nathan Fisch, and I'm a senior
11 environmental scientist at the California State
12 Water Resources Control Board.

13 This is one of four public scoping
14 meetings we're holding to provide an opportunity for
15 feedback on the Notice of Preparation of an
16 Environmental Impact Report for the Potter Valley
17 Hydroelectric Project Surrender and Decommissioning.

18 Please note this meeting is being
19 transcribed by a court reporter, Spencer, over here,
20 and the transcript will be posted to our website in
21 the coming weeks.

22 So let me introduce the State Water Board
23 team we have here today:

24 So we have Allison Rabe on the end here
25 from the Office of Chief Counsel, the attorney on

1 this project.

2 Next to her we have Erin Ragazzi, one of
3 our assistant deputy directors in the Division of
4 Water Rights.

5 Next to her we have Parker Thaler, our
6 environmental program manager in the water quality
7 certification program.

8 To my right we have Wilhelmina Chon, the
9 environmental scientist and project manager for this
10 project.

11 And in the back, we have Dana Heinrich
12 from the Office of Chief Counsel.

13 So what's the plan for today?

14 So in a few minutes, I'm going to hand
15 things over to Wilhemina who will provide some
16 background information on the State Water Board and
17 water quality certifications. Then we'll provide a
18 brief overview of the California Environmental
19 Quality Act process, and how the public can provide
20 input. Then we'll walk through an overview of the
21 Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project and PG&E's
22 Surrender application.

23 Next we'll discuss how everyone can stay
24 informed with the State Water Board's process, and
25 finally, we'll open the floor to receive verbal

1 comments from any meeting participants here today.

2 So a couple meeting logistics before we
3 get started. For those in the room, if you go
4 through the doors you came in and go to your left,
5 there are bathrooms around the corner. Over there
6 there's also some water if you need it.

7 In the event of an emergency, please go
8 through these doors to your right, downstairs, out
9 the front door, and meet in Cesar Chavez. Once we
10 -- Cesar Chavez Park. Once we get the all clear,
11 we'll come back and reconvene the meeting.

12 A couple more meeting logistics. So
13 today's a hybrid meeting. If you're joining in
14 person, please silence all electronic devices for
15 the duration of the meeting.

16 Please respect all speakers and their
17 points of view. Everyone is taking time out of
18 their day to be here today.

19 As a reminder, today's meeting is being
20 recorded by a court reporter, who will provide a
21 transcript of the meeting on our website in the
22 coming weeks, along with the presentation we go
23 through today.

24 If anyone is having trouble seeing the
25 presentation in the room, please flag one of us

1 down. We have a couple printed copies available if
2 you need it.

3 And lastly, please save all public
4 comments until the end of the presentation when we
5 open things up for public comment.

6 So with that, we'll hand things over to
7 Wilhemina.

8 MS. CHON: All right. Thanks, Nathan.

9 So hello. My name is Wilhelmina Chon, and
10 I'm an environmental scientist in the Division of
11 Water Rights and project manager for Potter Valley.

12 So why is the State Water Board involved?
13 The State Water Board has authority over water
14 rights and water quality in California. Our mission
15 is to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of
16 California's water resources as well as protect and
17 allocate water for many beneficial uses.

18 We are here today because Section 401 of
19 the Clean Water Act requires that any applicant
20 seeking a federal license or permit where the
21 proposed activity may result in a discharge to
22 surface water is required to obtain a water quality
23 certification from the State Water Board. The State
24 Water Board conditions hydroelectric projects via
25 water quality certifications to ensure the

1 protection of the State's waters.

2 Now I'd like to go over water quality
3 certifications and how they are related to the
4 federal license surrender order.

5 Water quality certifications focus on
6 protecting water quality and the beneficial uses of
7 water. If a water quality certification is issued,
8 the conditions in it become a mandatory part of the
9 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC,
10 license or surrender order for the project.

11 Water quality certifications ensure that a
12 project will comply with the water quality -- with
13 water quality objectives and beneficial uses as
14 outlined in the Regional Water Quality Control
15 Plans, also known as Basin Plans. In this case, the
16 North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Plans as
17 adopted by the North Coast Regional Water Quality
18 Control Board.

19 Certifications must also include
20 conditions to ensure compliance with water quality
21 control policies and other applicable requirements
22 of state law. For example, the certification will
23 require compliance with the Board's dredge or fill
24 procedures to ensure protection of state waters,
25 including wetlands.

1 PG&E plans to apply for a water quality
2 certification for its proposed project. The State
3 Water Board is non-positional and will act on the
4 application for water quality certification that we
5 anticipate receiving.

6 However, before the State Water Board can
7 issue a water quality certification, it must first
8 comply with the California Environmental Quality
9 Act, which I'll cover in a little bit.

10 In addition, the North Coast Regional
11 Water Quality Control Board adopted the policy in
12 support of restoration in the North Coast Region on
13 January 29th, 2015. The restoration policy states
14 that the Boards may permit or certify restoration
15 projects that result in significant and sometimes
16 unavoidable impacts if it is shown that the project
17 will result in long-term protection of beneficial
18 uses and water quality.

19 Under the restoration policy, temporary
20 exceedances in turbidity, temperatures, or other
21 water quality objectives in project affected
22 waterbodies can be authorized as long as it is shown
23 that the project will result in long-term protection
24 of beneficial uses and water quality objectives.

25 And that leads us to the California

1 Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA. CEQA informs
2 the State Water Board and the public about the
3 proposed project's potentially significant
4 environmental effects and ways to avoid, minimize,
5 or mitigate those impacts.

6 Since PG&E is not a public agency, the
7 State Water Board will be the lead agency for CEQA
8 and will prepare the CEQA document. In this case,
9 the State Water Board will be preparing a type of
10 CEQA document called an Environmental Impact Report,
11 or EIR. The CEQA document will be used to support
12 the conditions in the water quality certification
13 for the proposed project. Generally, the State
14 Water Board cannot issue a water quality
15 certification without completing CEQA.

16 The purpose of CEQA scoping is to identify
17 potentially significant environmental impacts
18 associated with the proposed project. Comments
19 received during scoping meetings help determine the
20 scope of environmental review as well as identify
21 potential project alternatives and mitigation
22 measures for potentially significant impact that may
23 arise from the project.

24 This flowchart provides a high-level
25 overview of the State Water Board's CEQA process.

1 After an environmental impact report is deemed
2 necessary, the State Water Board conducts meetings,
3 such as this one, to solicit public input to help in
4 the development of the report. When ready, a draft
5 environmental impact report will be released for
6 public comment for a minimum of 45 days.

7 After the public comment period concludes,
8 the State Water Board will then review and respond
9 to any public input that was received. Lastly, the
10 State Water Board will then issue a final
11 Environmental Impact Report for the project.

12 Next, I will provide a brief overview of
13 the Potter Valley Project.

14 The Potter Valley Project is owned and
15 operated by PG&E and is located on the Eel River and
16 East Branch Russian River in Lake and Mendocino
17 Counties. The nearest city is Ukiah, which is
18 approximately 15 miles southwest of the Potter
19 Valley Powerhouse.

20 This is an existing project, which is
21 comprised of Scott Dam, Lake Pillsbury, Potter
22 Valley Powerhouse, Cape Horn Dam, Van Arsdale
23 Reservoir, and several recreation areas. Water from
24 the Eel is diverted at Cape Horn Dam and is
25 discharged to the East Branch Russian River.

1 Prior to 2022, PG&E looked for a new owner
2 of the project but was unable to find one. PG&E
3 made the decision to surrender and decommission the
4 Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project.

5 In May and June of 2002, PG&E, at the
6 request of FERC, filed an initial plan and schedule
7 to submit a surrender and decommissioning plan.

8 PG&E submitted their final Surrender
9 Application to FERC in July of 2025 and intends to
10 apply for a water quality certification. Today's
11 meeting is meant to solicit public input that can
12 inform the development of the State Water Board's
13 CEQA document.

14 Now I will provide an overview of the
15 Potter Valley License Surrender and Decommissioning
16 Project.

17 As part of the proposed project, PG&E is
18 requesting to surrender and decommission the Potter
19 Valley Hydroelectric Project with the Federal Energy
20 Regulatory Commission. The proposed project
21 involves removal of Scott and Cape Horn Dams and
22 associated facilities followed by restoration of the
23 former lake areas.

24 In addition, PG&E is proposing to leave
25 the diversion facilities in place for future

1 diversions by a different party. I'll cover that in
2 a later slide.

3 Recreational facilities will either be
4 removed, restored, or transferred to another party.
5 Finally, the project includes 41 proposed plans and
6 measures, some of which have been developed and are
7 to be developed, which will be shown on the next
8 slide.

9 PG&E has proposed the following 41 plans
10 and measures as part of their surrender and
11 decommissioning plan. I'm not going over each plan
12 and measure in detail today, but if you'd like more
13 information or the full list of plans, please see
14 the Notice of Preparation issued on September 22nd,
15 2025. The Notice of Preparation is available on the
16 Potter Valley webpage, and the web address will be
17 shown at the end of the presentation.

18 So CEQA helps us to identify which
19 potentially significant impact the project may have.
20 The State Water Board expects that a number of
21 potentially significant impacts may occur as a
22 result of the proposed project. The resources on
23 the slide are part of a preliminary and non-
24 exhaustive list that would be potentially
25 significantly impacted by the project.

1 Please note, there is a concurrent project
2 that is separate from PG&E's surrender and
3 decommissioning project that is not a part of this
4 CEQA process. That project is called the New Eel
5 Russian Facility, or NERF, and the Eel Russian
6 Project Authority will be the CEQA lead for that
7 project. The authority is expected to seek a
8 separate water quality certification for the NERF in
9 the future. If you'd like more information, please
10 contact the Eel Russian Project Authority directly.

11 MR. FISCH: Thanks, Wilhelmina.

12 Now I'd like to discuss some options to
13 provide comments today. So if you're joining us on
14 Zoom, when we get to the public comment period,
15 please use the raised hand functionality and wait to
16 be called upon before we unmute you. Before
17 providing your comment, we ask that you introduce
18 yourself, spell your name for the court reporter and
19 any affiliation you may have.

20 If you're in the room today and you wish
21 to provide comments, there are speaker comment cards
22 in the back behind Dana. There's an option there to
23 either provide oral comments or written comments
24 today by not checking the oral comments box. Once
25 you've filled out that card, please flag one of us

1 down, and we'll collect those cards.

2 Since we expect multiple people to give
3 comments today, we ask you keep your comments to the
4 allotted time. Once we get there, we'll let you
5 know how much time you have.

6 And lastly, as a reminder, we're accepting
7 written comments until November 3rd that carry the
8 same weight as any written or oral comments we
9 receive today, so that's always an option.

10 So with that, I will hand things back over
11 to Wilhelmina.

12 MS. CHON: Thanks, Nathan.

13 So the State Water Board is seeking
14 comments on project alternatives, potentially
15 significant impacts, mitigation measures, and
16 anything related to the project to help us in the
17 development of an Environmental Impact Report. We
18 plan to evaluate PG&E's proposed project and a range
19 of alternatives. Any input on specific project
20 alternatives would be helpful.

21 Other comments regarding potential impacts
22 of the project and potential mitigation measures to
23 lessen those impacts would be helpful as well. All
24 public comments submitted by November 3rd, 2025,
25 will be considered.

1 After the draft Environmental Impact
2 Report is released, there will be another public
3 review and comment period to solicit input on that
4 document.

5 This slide here provides ways to stay
6 informed and stay up to date with the project. The
7 State Water Board will continue to update the Potter
8 Valley Hydroelectric Project webpage with
9 information and filings regarding the CEQA and water
10 quality certification process. The site url for the
11 Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project is shown on the
12 current slide.

13 On the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
14 webpage, you can find the Notice of Preparation that
15 we issued on September 22nd, 2025. The Notice of
16 Preparation has information on how to subscribe to
17 our online notification system called Gov Delivery.
18 If you sign up for Gov Delivery, they will send you
19 emails related to the Potter Valley Hydroelectric
20 Project and other projects pursuing certifications
21 managed by the Division of Water Rights.

22 As a reminder, we are accepting written
23 comments until 4:00 p.m. on November 3rd, 2025,
24 regarding the range of alternatives, potential
25 significant effects, and mitigation measures that

1 should be analyzed in the Environmental Impact
2 Report. Directions on how to submit comments by
3 email or hard copy mail are shown on the slide right
4 now.

5 So thank you for your attention. Before
6 we open the floor to public comments, I would like
7 to go over some reminders.

8 Please use the microphone to speak if you
9 are providing comments in person. Please wait until
10 you're asked to be unmuted to provide your comments.
11 Be sure to state and spell your name out before you
12 provide your comments. Please stick to your
13 allotted time and respect all speaker's points of
14 views. Written comments are accepted if you do not
15 wish to speak today.

16 MS. RAGAZZI: Do we have anyone in the
17 room that wants to provide comments today?

18 It doesn't look like it.

19 MR. FISCH: Okay. Anyone on the Zoom who
20 would like to provide comments today, please use the
21 raised hand functionality.

22 MS. CHON: Okay. I have someone with the
23 name Roar, R-O-A-R.

24 I'm going to unmute you now. You have
25 five minutes to provide your comment.

1 MS. WOOD: Hi. My name is Emily Wood, E-
2 M-I-L-Y, W-O-O-D, and I'm co-director of a small
3 community group called ROAR, which stands for
4 Revitalizing Opportunities for the Alderpoint
5 Region.

6 ROAR's mission is ecological restoration
7 for Alderpoint, which lies adjacent to the mainstem
8 of Eel River. My kids are fifth generation
9 Alderpoint community members and have grown up aside
10 the Eel.

11 For Alderpoint parents, the state of the
12 Eel feels terrible because, by default, because we
13 felt powerless to change it, we're teaching our kids
14 by our example that a damned and damaged river is
15 normal. My kids have never known the Eel as it
16 should be, clear, cold, healthy, and alive.

17 By July, Alderpoint's stretch of river is
18 so low, warm, and swampy, that it is unsafe. Fish
19 die. Kids get rashes and infections from swimming
20 in it. Our pet dogs get sick, and sometimes even
21 die after ingesting small amounts of water while
22 they swim.

23 None of that is natural or okay, and it's
24 the direct result of these dams. The Eel, or the
25 Taanchow as Alderpoint's tribal members call it,

1 holds state and federal law and scenic designations
2 meant to protect as scenic, wildlife, and cultural
3 values, but those values are disregarded every day
4 that the Potter Valley Project dams remain.

5 I'm also part of the Blackfeet Nation.
6 Our tribe believes that rivers are our relatives.
7 They have a spirit and a voice. The Eel, the
8 Taanchow, deserves to be treated as a beloved living
9 relative, not as a broken utility.

10 Globally, more and more nations are
11 recognizing that truth through law. That rivers
12 have rights equivalent to human rights, and so must
13 be protected from harm. Our river deserves no less.

14 As the State Water Board considers the
15 Section 401 water quality certification, please act
16 as guardians of a living river, not just regulators
17 of a project. Use current reduced diversions as a
18 baseline and move swiftly toward dam removal. We
19 can manage sediment responsibly and support habitat
20 recovery with care, but we shouldn't wait another
21 day, let alone another month or longer.

22 For all the children along the Eel's
23 riverbank, let's restore the Taanchow without delay.
24 Thank you.

25 MS. CHON: Thank you, Emily.

1 Next, I have Glen Spain.

2 MR. SPAIN: There we go. Can you hear me
3 now?

4 MS. CHON: Yes.

5 MR. SPAIN: My name is Glen Spain, G-L-E-
6 N, first name. Spain, S-P-A-I-N, last name. I am
7 the general legal counsel for the Pacific Coast
8 Federation of Fishermen's Associations, PCFFA, and
9 Institute for Fisheries Resources, its sister
10 organization.

11 Both these organizations are based in the
12 commercial fishing industry up and down the coast,
13 which has been deeply affected by problems in the
14 Eel River for more than 100 years. We urge the
15 board to frame the water quality certification not
16 just as a construction permit, but as a watershed
17 restoration tool.

18 The damage that's been done to the river
19 and the consequent damage to the fishing industry
20 has been enormous. Over the last 100 years, we have
21 plunged the populations from a high of about 800,000
22 returning adults to just most recently and then
23 improved at 9,500. That's a little less than 2
24 percent of historic abundance.

25 As a result, we've lost major fisheries in

1 Northern California, not only directly, because
2 there are no fish coming out of the Eel River that
3 can be caught, but because they're ESA listed. They
4 trigger restrictions up and down the coast through
5 weak stock management and through the ESA
6 obligations to avoid major portions of the harvest
7 of otherwise abundant fish. That has cost our
8 industry roughly \$80 million a year for the duration
9 of the dams, \$80 million in lost coastal economics
10 in today's dollars, and over 1,500 family- wage
11 jobs.

12 I want to talk about baselines. The
13 natural erosion system of the Eel is one of the
14 largest systems in California. It was noted -- one
15 study concluded that it was very sediment rich, as
16 much as 60 million tons of sediment transported
17 annually by the river naturally before the dams
18 existed. The baseline for determining sediment
19 levels should be that natural erosion flow, and
20 we'll supply the study that that conclusion came
21 from in our written comments.

22 The reason the PG&E is removing the dams
23 is because they're too expensive to operate.
24 Frankly, they're not operating at all, have not
25 generated power since 2021. The amount of water

1 diverted to the Eel River is on the order of 40,000
2 acre feet. They should be the baseline for
3 conditions that you compare to. The baseline is
4 current operations of the project, which essentially
5 is obsolete and no longer operating.

6 The geographic scope analysis is
7 important, too. You have to look at all the impacts
8 that come out of the dams in the river. That means
9 all the things that wash down the river. Sediment
10 washes down the river. Poor water quality washes
11 down the river to the estuary.

12 So you have to consider everything the
13 estuary adds to the potential impact, geographical
14 area, as well as the fisheries. Salmon that came
15 out of the Eel River migrated far north and far
16 south. If those salmon are there, that would be a
17 positive impact for coastal salmon dependent
18 communities like my people work in and live in all
19 up and down the coast.

20 So this was, by the way, the analysis that
21 was done in the Klamath Project. You look at the
22 analysis, including the impact of fisheries. That's
23 really important to really capture the ultimate
24 impacts of positive and negative.

25 The other thing is you need to consider

1 not only the impacts upon the project but the
2 impacts of the cost of doing nothing essentially.
3 What are the damages that we have? Those are what
4 we're trying to move away from through restoration
5 of the salmon runs and restoration of the river.

6 You have to have not only the positive but
7 the negatives. Economists, natural resource
8 economists, have made this point many times, and
9 there are guides for what needs to be included in a
10 legitimate cost-benefit analysis. That means not
11 only just the cost but the benefits as well.

12 And one of the benefits is that the river
13 will improve, and that will restore not only river
14 conditions but community health up and down the
15 river all the way to the estuary and hopefully
16 fisheries, which have a positive impact if they're
17 improved all up and down the coast.

18 The short-term impacts of sediment is a
19 concern. We had the same concern in the Klamath.
20 You'll recognize me, by the way, because I was
21 frequently before the Board on Klamath issues.

22 I would look to and recommend you look to
23 the Klamath sediment mitigation plan. It's working.
24 The total exceedance of water quality standards has
25 been on a matter of days to hours since dam removal.

1 The river is now meeting water quality standards
2 more than 95 percent of the time and is in better
3 condition today than it was pre-dam.

4 So I would look to that definitely. We'll
5 make that point in our comments as well.

6 Finally, I think you just need to make
7 sure that you take into account the benefits of dam
8 removal. This is a project that probably should
9 never have been built. It has had massive
10 destructive impacts up and down the river and needs
11 to be taken out, frankly, and there's no time to
12 lose because the salmon are ESA listed. They are on
13 the verge of extinction, not just the Chinook but
14 the Coho and Steelhead as well.

15 So all these things need to be moving
16 forward, and there are many ways to mitigate
17 sediment growth impacts. There are many, many ways
18 proposed to mitigate impacts of landowners around
19 Lake Pillsbury. All of this should be considered,
20 but we can't waste time getting this done. We have
21 to move forward as quickly as possible.

22 Thank you.

23 MS. CHON: Thank you, Glen.

24 Next, I have Abigail Black.

25 MS. BLACK: Good afternoon, Members of the

1 Board. My name is Abigail Black, and I'm speaking
2 on behalf of Save California Salmon.

3 Save California Salmon is a non-profit
4 dedicated to policy, change, and community advocacy
5 for Northern California salmon and fish-dependent
6 people, including tribes. We support the fisheries
7 and water protection work of the local communities
8 and advocate for effective policy change for clean
9 water, restored fisheries, and vibrant communities.

10 The Eel River is the third largest river
11 entirely in California and once sustained thriving
12 runs of salmon and Steelhead that have supported
13 tribal communities, local economies, and ecosystems
14 across five counties.

15 For more than a century, Scott and Cape
16 Horn dams have blocked more than 280 miles of
17 spawning and rearing habit. Downstream temperatures
18 have been raised up to 10 degrees Fahrenheit in the
19 summer months. Sediment delivery needed for gravel
20 formation has been reduced, and toxic methylmercury
21 buildup in aquatic food webs is now a serious
22 problem.

23 The result is near collapse of the once
24 abundant salmon runs. We now have a once in a
25 generation opportunity to restore this river and

1 return salmon to their ancestral waters.

2 The Potter Valley Project no longer
3 produces hydropower, and PG&E has confirmed that
4 Scott dam poses significant seismic risk. Removal
5 of both dams would protect public safety, restore
6 natural flows, and support tribal fishing and
7 cultural practices.

8 When it comes to the Section 401 water
9 quality certification, this is California's most
10 direct tool to ensure this project truly restores
11 the watershed. Short-term construction impacts are
12 real, but evidence from the Klamath River shows that
13 a strong 401 oversight can minimize that while
14 achieving lasting improvements to water quality and
15 river health.

16 The Board should frame this process not as
17 a construction permit but as a watershed restoration
18 opportunity. Further, the 401 scope should remain
19 focused on dam removal and any new diversions should
20 be a separate project.

21 We urge the Board to ensure that the
22 Environmental Impact Report includes a full analysis
23 of sediment release, downstream water quality, and
24 the cumulative effects of dam removal and ongoing
25 water diversions. It should assess long-term flow

1 restoration for salmon and not just survival-based
2 flows.

3 Further, the EIR should center tribal
4 leadership, prioritize fish passage and cold water
5 habitat restoration, and guarantee enforceable
6 mitigation measures that protect both people and
7 ecosystems throughout the decommissioning process.
8 This is our chance to heal the Eel and honor the
9 communities that have cared for it since time of
10 memorial.

11 Thank you.

12 MS. CHON: Thank you, Abigail.

13 Next, I have Sara Bates.

14 MS. BATES: Yes. Hi. Good afternoon.
15 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment
16 this afternoon. My name is Sarah Bates, S-A-R-A-H,
17 B-A-T-E-S. I fish commercially out of San
18 Francisco, and I'm also representing PCFFA and IFR
19 today.

20 San Francisco is a long way from the Eel
21 River, but we catch all of our fish in the ocean.
22 My biggest fishery is salmon fishing, Chinook salmon
23 specifically in California, and the Eel River is the
24 largest component of the California Coastal Chinook,
25 evolutionarily significant unit. And this ESU is

1 critical to our fisheries for a couple reasons.

2 One is that it is constraining stock for
3 our ocean fisheries, and fish have tails, and they
4 all come out of the river and mix in the ocean. And
5 when we are fishing, we don't have the ability to
6 decide which river we are targeting the fish from.

7 So because this ESU is listed as
8 threatened under the Endangered Species Act, we are
9 heavily constrained in all of our ocean fisheries,
10 both recreational and commercial, due to the low
11 population numbers of the California Coastal
12 Chinook.

13 The second reason that the Coastal
14 Chinooks are important to our ocean fisheries is
15 that they are a potential contributor to harvest.
16 Glen mentioned some of this already.

17 But historically, we had 800,000 adults in
18 the ocean that came out of the Eel River, and this
19 is the potential contributor to our harvest
20 statewide. And the economics of this are a multi-
21 million dollar industry and direct support of
22 coastal communities throughout California.

23 True recovery of the Eel River ecosystems
24 need to incorporate habitat restoration, spawning
25 improvement, which can look like a lot of things.

1 It can look like egg injection in the gravel. It
2 can look like adult trap and haul. It can look like
3 streamside hatch boxes. All of those need to be
4 worked out with the various agencies.

5 But all of this habitat restoration and
6 spawning improvement starts with dam removal. We
7 need to bring the river back to its original state.
8 And there will undoubtedly be a lot of short-term
9 impacts, which are very real, but these short-term
10 impacts can be mitigated or minimized with
11 thoughtful planning.

12 And I think, to Glen's point, that we have
13 a lot of lessons that we can learn from the
14 successful dam removal on the Klamath last year.
15 And the short-term impacts will be greatly, greatly
16 outweighed by the long-term beneficial uses of the
17 watershed protections.

18 You may know that our salmon fisheries --
19 our commercial salmon fishing in California has
20 completely closed for three years now, and we're
21 playing the long game here. We are actually really
22 excited about some of the investments in the
23 ecosystem and the economies of the -- the local
24 economies and the state economies that can benefit
25 from this Eel River dam removal.

1 So I thank you for your time.

2 MS. CHON: Thank you, Sarah.

3 Next, I have Nikcole Whipple.

4 MS. WHIPPLE: (Speaking in native
5 language.)

6 My name is Nikcole Whipple, N-I-K-C-O-L-E,
7 W-H-I-P-P-L-E, and I am a member Round Valley Indian
8 Tribes, and today I'm speaking as a tribal member.

9 So the Round Valley Indian Tribes located
10 in Round Valley, Mendocino County, is, you know, one
11 of the first reservations to be created by Executive
12 Order. Our tribe represents seven different tribes,
13 and many more. Federally, we recognize seven tribes
14 who are all connected to the Eel River.

15 One of those tribes, which I hold as very
16 dear and close to my heart, is the Yuki tribe. The
17 Potter Valley Project sits on top of a Yuki site,
18 and historically, the Yuki people were one of the
19 first people in California to be harmed by the first
20 court justice, Hastings.

21 So as we talk about the importance of this
22 dam and the dam removal -- and thank you to all of
23 the Board members who are upholding their tribal
24 trust responsibilities and assuring that this
25 project moves forward in a quick process -- I ask

1 that you truly consider the artifacts and the sites
2 that have been sitting under water in this project.

3 I ask that you understand that as we --
4 you know, as it was shared in the beginning of this
5 presentation about water rights and how they apply
6 to the state and how the state oversees and then
7 abides to the federal government, to understand that
8 water rights are the entitlement authorizing water
9 usage, but these are only property rights. The
10 holders do not own the water. They own the right to
11 use.

12 And as tribal people, we -- you know, to
13 reiterate from our previous commenter that, you
14 know, we see the water as having rights of its own
15 and needing protection as well as respected as a
16 living being.

17 So while the California State Water Board
18 may be called upon to adjudicate California water
19 rights in respect to tribal water rights, those
20 state and federal laws apply, and in Winters, the
21 Supreme Court held that federally reserved lands
22 have a right to use sufficient water to fill the
23 primary purpose of the reservation, claiming that
24 tribal water rights cannot be destroyed by state
25 water law or by water users acting in accordance

1 with state law.

2 As we talk more about state processes and
3 basin plans -- you know, that was another
4 conversation that was brought up -- or another
5 example of talking about the Eel River sits in the
6 north coast regional basin. You've had the
7 opportunity to do quite a bit of study and research
8 on the Eel River and found that our basin plans are
9 basically nonexistent.

10 The TMDLs -- there are five TMDLs because
11 the Eel River is the third largest salmon bearing
12 river in California, and the -- while the TMDLs
13 prove and provide that, you know, there is
14 significant loads of erosion and things that happen
15 in our river naturally, they have been, you know,
16 altered in this dam, and so it is fearful because we
17 know that is happening. That is -- that's what's at
18 the bottom of this dam, and it's kind of scary to
19 think, given that the TMDLs have been in place for a
20 while, that all the sediment is sitting.

21 But that is part of the natural flow of
22 the river and what it's intended to do, part of the
23 natural filtration system, and you know, I'll --
24 I'll say it again. There is no alternative other
25 than to take this dam down, but looking at

1 alternatives in the process of removing the dam, you
2 know, I ask that the Board consider heavily weighing
3 in on the tribal tribes who are a part of this river
4 and identifying our respected tribal cultural
5 resources and tribal beneficial uses and understand
6 how important it is that we return those resources
7 to this riparian area and protect that area and move
8 as quickly as possible in a time that will not harm
9 our fish species.

10 And with that, I just ask for -- also for
11 better water quality scoping and testing to happen.
12 We are very well aware that throughout the state,
13 particularly, you know, in the neighboring county,
14 or County of Lake, that there are major, major
15 concerns of cyanobacteria as well as microcystin,
16 and, you know, we've been told by other tribes that
17 there is, you know, existing mercury and arsenic and
18 just finding ways to, again, understand that the
19 natural system of this river is to be flowing
20 through this heavily sediment flowing river as part
21 of its natural cleansing.

22 But being cognizant and acknowledging that
23 those things are there, and that we need to move
24 with caution to not spread and think about the
25 quality of the water that is being diverted.

1 Thank you for your time.

2 MS. CHON: Thank you, Nikcole.

3 I don't have any additional hands, but if
4 you'd like to provide a comment, please use the
5 raised hand function, and then I will unmute you.

6 MR. FISCH: All right. Well, it looks
7 like we don't have any other hands. Oh, we have one
8 more. Spoke too soon.

9 MS. CHON: I have Regina from Save
10 California Salmon. Regina, I will unmute you now.

11 MS. CHICHIZOLA: Hi. Sorry. I was unable
12 to unmute. Can you hear me?

13 MS. CHON: Yes, we can hear you.

14 MS. CHICHIZOLA: Hello.

15 MS. CHON: Can you hear us?

16 MS. CHICHIZOLA: Hi. Can you hear me?

17 MS. CHON: Yes, we can hear you.

18 MS. CHICHIZOLA: Oh, okay. Sorry. I
19 wasn't sure. I apologize. I have some slides I
20 wanted to show since we're online, but I didn't
21 realize that wasn't possible. I should have reached
22 out. I will email them in. And I did talk in
23 Fortuna quickly the other day, so I'll try and be
24 very quick.

25 My name is Regina Chichizola, C-H-I-C-H-I,

1 again, Z-O-L-A, and I'm with Save California Salmon.
2 And I was trying to wait until the end because I
3 have some additional comments based on the fact that
4 I can hear a lot better on this hearing and also
5 that I've had some time to go over some data from
6 the Klamath River. And also, there was a few
7 concerns that I had after the last hearing.

8 So first, I want to thank you for starting
9 this 401 certification process in such a timely
10 manner. It's very important that we get these dams
11 out as quickly as possible.

12 I agree with Glen Spain's comment that
13 these dams should not have been allowed to be built
14 in the first place. It's such a massive impact for
15 what was a very low amount of power generation, and
16 it also takes so much of the Eel River's flow out of
17 the river, which I know the water issues are not
18 part of this process, but I do think recommendations
19 for instream flow should be something that's
20 considered as part of the permitting because, as we
21 know, water quality and water quantity is so deeply
22 connected.

23 I agree with the comments that this should
24 be a restoration-focused process, and I'm really
25 glad to see that the restoration policy is being

1 invoked. I do think that there are a lot of issues
2 at hand.

3 As we know, dams warm water, diversions
4 warm water, and the Eel River has some major water
5 quality issues, and in some years, it even goes dry.
6 And it's just been too long since people have been
7 able to fish or swim in the river, and I appreciate
8 the comments earlier from residents saying this.

9 I wanted to encourage the Board, on top of
10 other processes, to make sure to meet with both
11 recognized and non-recognized tribes within the Eel
12 River watershed. As you're aware, there is a deep
13 history of injustice towards tribes within this
14 watershed.

15 And then also, I just want to go through
16 really quickly that on the Klamath, we've seen that
17 the water quality impacts from dam removal have
18 actually been much less than what could be -- than
19 what we ever thought they would be. There were some
20 spikes where dissolved oxygen went very low. They
21 were extremely short-term impacts.

22 And this -- also, the same is true with
23 the sediment. We saw the sediment clear out
24 extremely quickly, and even while dam removal was
25 happening and this massive sediment load was going

1 down river on the Klamath, the river actually was
2 colder and had better dissolved oxygen during the
3 time -- during dam removal than they had with the
4 dam in.

5 And so that's just a testimony of how
6 important it is for these dam -- for dam removal to
7 happen to actually meet beneficial uses in the Eel
8 River watershed.

9 With that said, I do agree with the 401
10 certification, and the really wonderful planning had
11 a lot to do with why those short-term impacts were
12 so quick and localized.

13 And so with that, I would like the Board
14 to think about the fact that on the Klamath River,
15 we did have the Klamath River Renewal Corporation,
16 which had a lot of our local residents and tribal
17 members and scientists as part of the KRC.

18 In this situation, we're looking at PG&E
19 being in charge, and I think it's obvious to most
20 people that they have a lot less care when they are
21 interacting with communities, and especially a lot
22 less care when they're interacting with rivers.

23 So I would just like to see -- to make
24 sure there's a really robust restoration plan to
25 help deal with the sediments that are in the

1 reservoir beaches and just make sure that the area
2 can fully recover because, as Nikcole said earlier,
3 these are really important sites to the tribes, and
4 they have the opportunity to also be really amazing
5 areas for really robust restoration.

6 In the Klamath, we've seen the reservoir
7 sites are actually much more diverse and healthy
8 than the areas around them because of the open
9 grazing and inland impacts that have happened to the
10 river. And some of the healthiest watersheds and
11 habitat I've ever seen is actually where the
12 reservoirs used to be. So having that restoration
13 plan in place is the reason why that happened.

14 Also, I'd like to see a really well-done
15 drawdown plan, and then, as I said, I think having
16 instream flow recommendations or even requirements
17 that are put into place, probably recommendations,
18 so that when the water rights process goes down, you
19 know, at least we know what the fish actually need.
20 It could be helpful.

21 And then last I wanted to say I think it's
22 important when there's actually a plan that comes
23 out, that we look closely at the Board's racial
24 equity plan and racial equity action plan --
25 resolution and action plan because I think it would

1 be good to have a little more notice, especially
2 within the Eel River communities themselves.

3 I thank you guys a lot for coming to the
4 Eel River when we asked, but at the same time,
5 because it wasn't much of a notice, it was very hard
6 for people because it is such a remote and rural
7 watershed to come out.

8 So if we had some more notice and maybe
9 even, you know, some workshops where you explain
10 what the actual process looks like and what the
11 plans look like, I think it would really help with
12 engagement.

13 With that said, I just really want to
14 thank you for being -- really focusing on water
15 quality. You know, the Eel River has been extremely
16 polluted from lack of flow from these dams for a
17 very long time, and it's been -- someone at the
18 Fortuna hearing said that they couldn't believe it.
19 It's been their entire lifetime since they've been
20 able to fish on the river. And for the tribes, it's
21 been several lifetimes now since they've been able
22 to fish on the river.

23 And I think, actually, meeting water
24 quality standards and making sure to deal with the
25 sediment and pollution and toxic algae and

1 temperature issues will change that, and that can be
2 done through dam removal and through protection of
3 instream flows.

4 So thank you so much for hearing me again.
5 I will send in that slide show since I can't show
6 slides, but I was just so impressed to see how
7 quickly the salmon have come back and how quickly
8 the water quality has rebounded on the Klamath.
9 It's only been a year.

10 I mean, it's just very amazing, and I
11 can't wait to see the same thing happen on the Eel
12 River because it's just been too long since people
13 have felt comfortable with touching and interacting
14 with the water there.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. CHON: Thank you. Thank you, Regina.

17 If we have anyone else who would like to
18 provide comment, please use the raise-hand function,
19 and we'll call on you shortly.

20 MR. FISCH: Okay. It looks like we don't
21 have any more.

22 Thank you, everyone for being here today.
23 As a reminder, we're accepting comments through
24 November 3rd.

25 We have more information here on the slide

1 on how you can provide those comments.

2 Thanks again for being here today and have
3 a good rest of your day.

4 Thank you.

5 (WHEREUPON, the Public Scoping Meeting
6 concluded at 1:37 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, Spencer Fortin, do hereby certify that I reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing matter and that the foregoing transcript pages constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said proceedings to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am neither related to counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any interest in the outcome of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 30th day of October, 2025.



Spencer Fortin

Certificate No. 2405