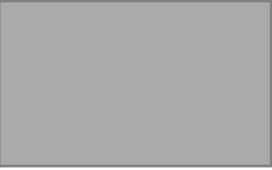


Presented to the CEQA Scoping Workshop, September 27, 2005 at Chester, CA.

Comments of Russell Lesko



Project Title: Environmental Impact Report for the Upper North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project Water Quality Certification

Good afternoon. My name is Russ Lesko; I am a recently-retired natural resources professional. I last served as Chief of Natural Resources at Lassen Volcanic National Park. I have been a year-round resident at Lake Almanor since 1995.

My comments this afternoon will be limited to the aesthetic issues associated with one of the alternative measures that the SWRCB has identified and is considering for inclusion in the DEIR, that measure being, and I quote, "Installation of a temperature control device for selective withdrawal of cold water through the Prattville intake structure", otherwise known to the rest of us as thermal curtains.

The first potential impact discussed in the NOP is AESTHETICS. There are four categories under aesthetics, all of which have been checked as "Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated". Two of those categories are:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista
- c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

I respectfully suggest to the Board that the floats required to suspend thermal curtains are large, unsightly, metallic contraptions, not unlike large propane tanks, that would substantially degrade the scenic resources that are Lake Almanor and Butt Valley Reservoir. In the case of Lake Almanor, the floats would be approximately 2600 feet in length. That perimeter is depicted in this aerial photograph of a boat demonstration that was conducted in October, 2004. In the case of Butt Valley Reservoir, there would be two separate thermal curtains with their associated suspension systems.

Anyone who has seen the thermal curtain at Whiskeytown Lake can attest to the visual blight it is. I further suggest to the Board that mitigating the scenic impact of the curtains, as indicated on page 9 of the NOP, is simply not possible.

I would be remiss not to mention the eyesore that the Lake Almanor curtain poses were it to be placed in front of what is designated in the Project 2105 Settlement Agreement as Marvin Alexander Beach. Marvin was a beloved and respected man who spent 20 years of his life defending Lake Almanor water levels, water quality and lake aesthetics.

**From:** Russ Lesko [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 28, 2005 9:48 AM  
**To:** 2105comments@nsrnet.com  
**Cc:** uncapher@nsrnet.com; Bill Dennison  
**Subject:** Fw: Comments of Russ Lesko to the SWRCB CEQA Scoping Workshop

Presented to the State Water Resource Control Board at the  
CEQA Scoping Workshop,  
September 27, 2005 at Chester, CA.

Comments of Russell Lesko

[REDACTED]

Project Title: Environmental Impact Report for the Upper  
North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project Water  
Quality Certification

Good afternoon. My name is Russ Lesko; I am a recently-retired natural resources professional. I last served as Division Chief for Natural Resources at Lassen Volcanic National Park. I have been a year-round resident of Lake Almanor since 1995.

As I am participating in a group response, my comments this afternoon will be limited to the aesthetic issues associated with one of the alternative measures that the SWRCB has identified and is considering for inclusion in the DEIR, that measure being, and I quote, “Installation of a temperature control device for selective withdrawal of cold water through the Prattville intake structure”, otherwise known to the rest of us as thermal curtains.

The first potential impact discussed in the NOP is AESTHETICS. There are four categories under aesthetics, all of which have been checked as “Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated”. Two of those categories are:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista
- c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

I respectfully suggest to the Board that the floats required to suspend thermal curtains are large, unsightly, metallic contraptions, similar in size to giant propane tanks, that would substantially degrade the scenic resources that are Lake Almanor and Butt Valley Reservoir. In the case of Lake Almanor, the floats would be approximately 2600 feet in length. That perimeter is depicted in the attached aerial photograph of a boat demonstration that was conducted in

October, 2004. In the case of Butt Valley Reservoir, there would be two separate thermal curtains with their associated suspension systems.

Anyone who has seen the thermal curtain at Whiskeytown Lake can attest to the visual blight it is. The NOP states (page 8, paragraph 4):

"Potentially significant unless mitigation [is] incorporated" applies if implementation of a mitigation measure would  
reduce effects to a less-than-significant level.

I challenge the board to come up with a mitigation method that adequately addresses the degradation of the beauty of these two scenic lakes.

I would be remiss not to mention the eyesore that the Lake Almanor curtain poses were it to be placed in front of what is designated in the Project 2105 Settlement Agreement as Marvin Alexander Beach. Marvin was a beloved and respected man who spent 20 years of his life defending Lake Almanor water levels, water quality and lake aesthetics. Marvin passed away in September, 2004, but not before admonishing PG&E, the SWRCB and FERC that support for a thermal curtain would be political suicide.

Another visual impact associated with thermal curtains is the spoils that will be placed on the lake shores. For Lake

Almanor that would most likely be in the Prattville area. It is my understanding that the volume of these spoils would equate to the size of a football field 15 feet high. These spoils constitute another visual blight that does not easily lend itself to mitigation.

Lastly, all three thermal curtains would have to be lit from dusk to dawn for reasons of boating safety. This lighting system would produce substantial, widespread light pollution in an otherwise remote, pristine environment. This is unacceptable.

In closing, I ask the Board to apply their own criteria with objectivity and due diligence. If you do that, I think you will conclude that thermal curtains do not meet these criteria, their aesthetic impacts can not be mitigated, and that inclusion of thermal curtains as a project alternative in the DEIR can not be justified. I urge the Board to give other alternatives for cooling downstream waters due consideration, and suggest that riparian vegetation enhancement measures on the North Fork Feather River be the foundation of a more comprehensive approach.

I thank the Board for this opportunity to express my concerns. I've included an article from the Chester Progressive dated October 13, 2004 and the aerial of photo of the boat demonstration with my comments today.

Version: 7.0.344 / Virus Database: 267.11.7/112 - Release Date: 9/26/2005

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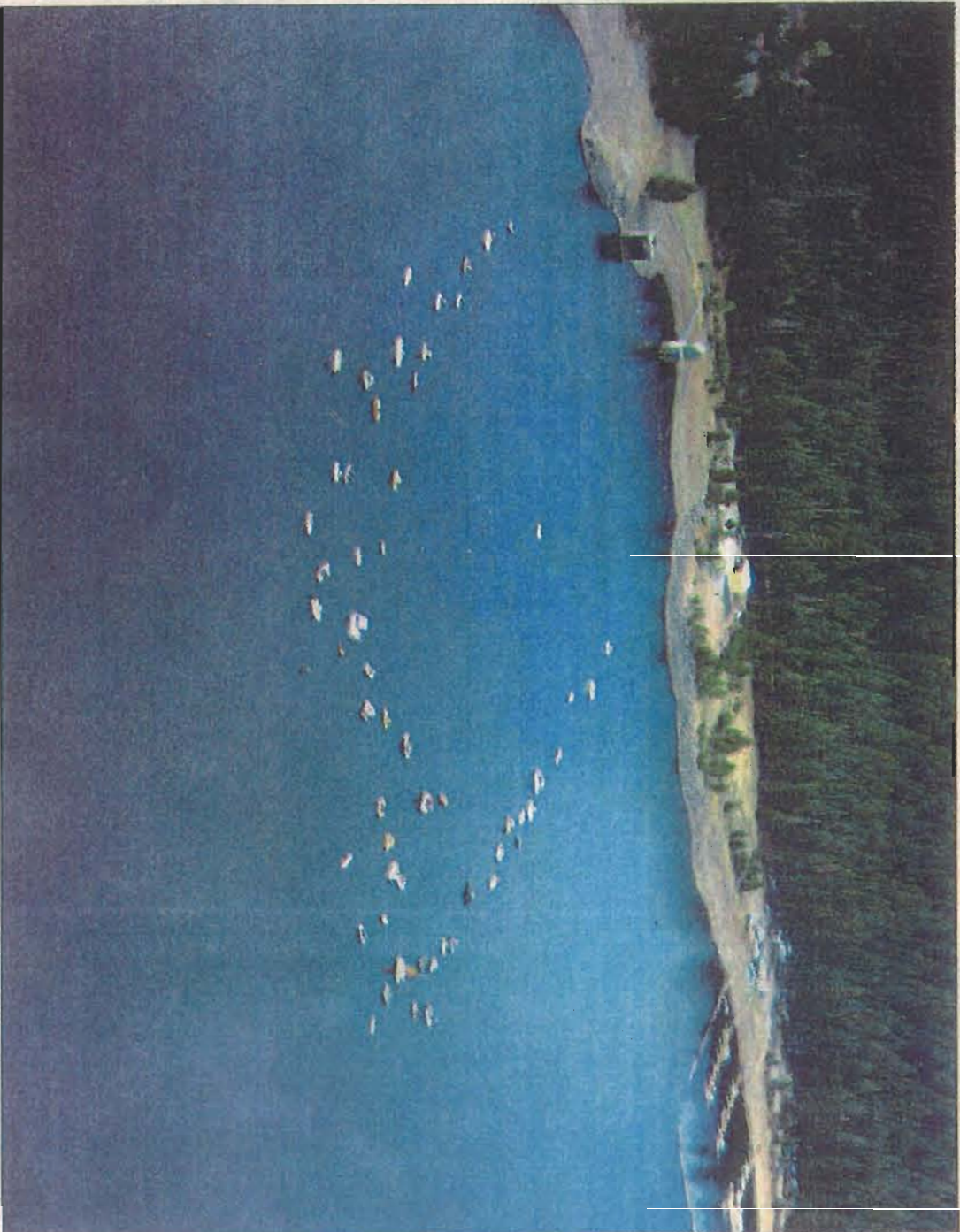
In closing, I ask the Board to apply their own criteria with objectivity and due diligence. If you do that, I think you will conclude that thermal curtains do not meet the aesthetics criteria for inclusion as a project alternative in the DEIR. I further ask the Board to give other alternatives for cooling downstream waters a fair assessment, with an emphasis on riparian vegetation enhancement measures on the North Fork Feather River.

I thank the Board for this opportunity to express my concerns. I've included an article from the Chester Progressive dated October 13, 2004 and the aerial of photo of the boat demonstration with my comments today.









Photos submitted  
At the Oct. 2 Save Lake Almanor committee protest, 75 boats outlined Pacific Gas and Electric Company's proposed thermal curtain at the Prattville water intake on Lake Almanor. Bob Mitchell coordinated the demonstration.

## Protest planned

### Save Lake Almanor members expected tomorrow

**By Marian Liddell**  
Chester Editor

are at the Memorial Hall in Chester.

Ed Wing from the SLA committee stated in an e-mail after the SLA committee's Oct. 2 protest at the Prattville intake, "We will need to stay energized!"

Bill Dennison, who is a Plumas County Supervisor, the 2106 Committee Chairman and 2106 Licensing Group member, said "congratulations" in an Oct. 4 e-mail to protest organizers. He congratulated them for outlining the proposed thermal curtain with boats, so that others could comprehend the proposal.

The Lake Almanor thermal curtain (cold water collection system) proposal originated under the December 2000 Rock Creek-Cresta Relicensing Settlement.

**See Protest, page 4A**

The Save Lake Almanor committee has planned protests for two public meetings scheduled on Thursday, Oct. 14, at 10 a.m., and on Tuesday, Oct. 19, at 6 p.m. Both meetings



# Protest....

Continued from page 1A

ment Agreement (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project No. 1962). The proposal is an unresolved issue of the FERC Project No. 2105 settlement agreement reached by the 2105 Licensing Group in March and signed in April.

Plumas County's Project 2105 Committee Web site states that the 2105 LG is "a group of interested parties working collaboratively to reach agreement on outstanding licensing issues."

The work of the 2105 LG, which includes the scheduled Oct. 14 meeting, has continued since March to resolve the thermal curtain issue. Other unresolved issues include PG&E's right to erode Lake Almanor's shoreline and the number of years for the new Project 2105 license.

The current 50-year license for Project 2105 expires Oct. 31. FERC is the controlling authority for PG&E's projects on federal lands and is expected to renew Project 2105's license for at least 30 years.

As part of the Project 2105 licensing process, which has been ongoing for many years, FERC will hold a public meeting in Chester on Oct. 19. The agenda includes public comment on environmental issues related to Project 2105.

## FERC Project No. 2105

Project 2105 encompasses PG&E's Upper North Fork of the Feather River hydro facilities, which include Lake Almanor and Butt Reservoir.

The Project 1962 agreement states that PG&E is required to maintain water temperatures of 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) or less in the Feather River between Rock Creek Dam and Cresta Power House "to the extent that Licensee (PG&E) can reasonably control such temperatures."

The intent is to improve and restore eco-systems as mandated under state and federal regulatory agencies, including the State Department of Water Resources Control Board.

The Project 1962 agreement suggests PG&E consider controlling the temperature by

drawing from a cold water layer in Lake Almanor.

An Iowa University study concluded that water collected behind a proposed 700- by 900-foot thermal curtain wall could be pumped through the Prattville intake, down the existing penstock (piping) to Butt Reservoir, and to the Rock Creek and Cresta sites.

The proposal does not anticipate the need for more water than is currently being released, but it could take up to 50 percent of the cold water in Lake Almanor during the summer months.

Dennison's Oct. 2 e-mail stated that concerns include "the aesthetics of Lake Almanor, the loss of a good fishing area and the safety (of) boaters," along with the environmental degradation of Lake Almanor and Butt Reservoir.

PG&E's representatives are estimating the cost for the proposal at over \$30 million. Project 2105 manager Tom Jereb said PG&E customers would pay for the project.

## Maidu concerns

The Tasmam Koyom Indi-



Photos submitted

**The Oct. 1 Save Lake Almanor committee rally at the Chester Post Office focused on mailing 2,000-plus petition signatures.**

an Sanctuary Foundation is also protesting the thermal

curtain.

In a Sept. 16 letter to FERC,

foundation president Fred Mankins states, "There seems to be a lack of scientific alternative or plans to the temperature curtains being installed in Lake Almanor-Butt Lake."

Mankins writes that the "Maidu people are not convinced that all means of alternative methods has been studied."

He states that PG&E's past stewardship of the stream's eco-system was not effective.

"Years of logging and shade canopy removal of over story protection has left stream courses open to warmer temperatures," Mankins wrote.

Mankins further writes that "Indian grave sites as well as village sites under the Prattville intake and surrounding areas ... would play a unconditional negotiation factor in the (proposed) dredging process," associated with the construction of the proposed thermal curtain.

For the complete text of this letter and other protest letters see the 2105 Committee's Web site: [project2105.org](http://project2105.org)