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STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
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DIV OF WATER RIGHTS
SACRAMENTO

March 26, 2015

Peter Barnes
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000
E-Mail: Peter.Barnes@waterboards.ca.gov

Re: Upper North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project Draft EIR

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the State Water Resources Control Board's Upper North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project Draft Environmental Impact Report ("EIR"). In general, I find the EIR confusing and unclear. Lake Almanor has been operated for the last 50-some years as a hydroproject. The environment and community has adjusted to this. Now significant changes are being proposed. As I understand it, PG&E, the county, and other stakeholders held extensive negotiations and developed a settlement agreement in 2004. That settlement provided more cold water flows down the river while maintaining enough cold water and suitable lake levels at Lake Almanor so that its recreational benefits would be preserved. For some reason the EIR includes two project "alternatives" that involve thermal curtains and even more water releases that would significantly impact Lake Almanor. Why are any alternatives necessary when the proposal to operate per the settlement already provides beneficial changes that will cool the river downstream?

Those that live in and visit Plumas County value the natural resources of Lake Almanor. The EIR's thermal curtain and increased cold water outflow alternatives will significantly impact the fisheries and visual beauty of Lake Almanor. The EIR admits that these alternatives will significantly impact Lake Almanor's fisheries and potentially cause a massive fish kill. Why would the State Water Board consider alternatives that will harm Lake Almanor's beneficial uses by draining the lake of its cold water? I thought CEQA prevented public agencies from harming the environment. This is bad policy.

The EIR also fails to evaluate the recreational economy that is tied to the Lake Almanor fisheries – an important economic driver in this region. Harm to the fish means harm to the community because fewer people will visit and fish the lake. This will probably result in closed and abandoned businesses and homes, and declining funds for public services. The EIR should not ignore this issue.

I request that you reject the thermal curtain / increased release alternatives and ensure protection of Lake Almanor and the surrounding community.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Nelson
Vice President
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