

Concepts and Practices Applicable to All Relicensing Studies

The general concepts and practices below apply to all North Fork Stanislaus River Hydroelectric Project, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Project Number 2409 (Project), relicensing studies conducted by Calaveras County Water District (CCWD). These general concepts and practices are not repeated in each study description.

- Personal safety is the most important consideration of each fieldwork team. All field work will be conducted in conformance with health and safety plans developed by CCWD and its consultants.
- If required for the performance of the study, CCWD will make a good faith effort to obtain permission to access private property well in advance of initiating the study. CCWD will only enter private property if the landowner provides written permission.
- CCWD will acquire all necessary agency permits and approvals prior to beginning fieldwork for a study that requires them, and the field crew will have the necessary expertise to conduct the work.
- CCWD's field crews, at their sole discretion, may make variances to the study description in the field to accommodate actual field conditions and unforeseen problems. The reason for the changes may include excluding areas where access is unsafe (e.g., very steep terrain, impassable vegetation, or high streamflow). When a variance is made, the field crew will follow to the extent applicable the protocols in and intent of the study description.
- CCWD's performance of the study does not presume that the Project is affecting the resources to be investigated under the study, or that CCWD is responsible for addressing any adverse effects to the resource that may be identified from the study. Effects identified during a study may not be related to the Project but caused by a third party. CCWD is not responsible to address non-Project effects that may be identified during a relicensing study.
- If Global Positioning System (GPS) data are required by a study description, they will be collected using either a Map Grade Trimble™ GPS (i.e., sub-meter data collection accuracy under ideal conditions) or similar unit. GPS data will be post-processed and exported from the GPS unit into Geographic Information System (GIS) compatible file format in an appropriate coordinate system using desktop software. Both field staff and a GIS analyst will then review the resulting GIS file. Metadata will be developed for deliverable GIS data sets. GIS data and/or maps will be provided to the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service), United States Department of the Interior (USDOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), USDOI, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), USDOI, Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) in a form, such as Esri Shapefile or Geodatabase format with appropriate metadata. Metadata will be Federal Geographic Data Committee compliant.

- CCWD’s field crews conducting relicensing studies will record incidental records of special-status aquatic, botanical, and wildlife species observed during the performance of field work and record other noteworthy observations. All incidental observations will be reported in the CCWD’s Draft License Application (DLA) and Final License Application (FLA). The purpose of this effort is not to conduct a focused study (i.e., no effort in addition to the specific field tasks identified for the specific study plan) or to make all field crews experts in identifying all species, but only to opportunistically gather data during the performance of relicensing studies. Species targeted for incidental observation will include but are not limited to bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*); golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*); American goshawk (*Accipiter atricapillus*); short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*); long-eared owl (*Asio otus*); Northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*); white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*); great gray owl (*Strix nebulosa*); any bats or positive signs (e.g., bat guano) of bats; northernwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*); foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylei*); American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*); and other aquatic invasive species including quagga (*Dreissena bugensis*), zebra (*Dreissena polymorpha*), and golden mussel (*Limnoperna fortunei*), Asian clam (*Corbicula fluminea*), New Zealand mudsnail (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*), Didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*), Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), and Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*).
- If CCWD field crews observe aquatic invasive species, they will notify CDFW’s Aquatic Invasive Species Regional Coordinator at 530-333-7749 or angie.montalvo@wildlife.ca.gov, within 48 hours for invasive mussels and seven days for all other Aquatic invasive species.
- CCWD’s field crews will follow the 2022 CDFW Decontamination Protocol¹, be provided with, and use materials (e.g., Quat disinfectant) for decontaminating their boots, waders, and other equipment between water-based study sites. Major concerns are amphibian chytrid fungus and invasive invertebrates.
- If CCWD’s field crews observe an Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed or other special-status species, a completed record of the observation on the appropriate form will be submitted to CDFW’s California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) within 30 days of the observation.
- If a study description requires collection and reporting of time series data, the data will be provided at a minimum in Microsoft Excel™ (*.xlsx) or Hydrologic Engineering Center Data Storage System (HEC-DSS) (*.dss) format. A viewer for *.dss files (HEC-DSSVue) can be obtained from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) at the following website as of February 2026: <http://www.hec.usace.army.mil/software/hecdssvue/>.

¹ CDFW (California Department of Fish and Wildlife). 2022. Aquatic Invasive Species Decontamination Protocol. October 3, 2022. Available online at: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=43333>.

- If a CCWD field crew encounters human remains during field work, all work within a 100-foot radius of the discovery will stop immediately. The field crew will not disturb the remains in any way. The field crew will secure the area to the best of its ability, mark the location with flagging tape in such a way as to not draw attention to the remains, and record the location using a GPS unit or plot the location by hand on a map if no GPS unit is available. As soon as possible thereafter, the field crew will contact CCWD and the relicensing Cultural Resources Lead to report on the discovery. CCWD will immediately report the discovery to the county coroner and the federal land managing agency, if the discovery is located on federally managed lands. CCWD will conduct any further steps required under State of California and federal law to address the discovery, as appropriate. Any human remains encountered will be treated with respect, and the field crew members will keep the location confidential and will not disclose the location of the discovery to the public or to any other study crew. The field crew will keep a log of all calls/contacts it makes regarding the discovery and the details of the event. Work will not proceed in the secure area of the discovery until provided clearance by CCWD.
- Prior to issuance of CCWD's DLA and FLA, CCWD will provide information resulting from each relicensing study to interested parties after study data are collected, tabulated, summarized, and reviewed for quality. If a study description includes a format for reporting study data, the information will be posted in that format and the material will be marked appropriately (e.g., "PUBLIC", "CONTAINS CUI/PRIV - DO NOT RELEASE", or "CONTAINS CEII – DO NOT RELEASE"). The information will be posted to the relicensing website and CCWD will send an e-mail to interested parties advising the information is available. If study data are collected in manner inconsistent with the applicable study description, the posting will include a description of any inconsistency and why it occurred.
- In the performance of relicensing studies and reporting of information, if a study description or reported information pertains to a river mile (RM) along the North Fork Stanislaus River, Stanislaus River, Highland Creek, and Beaver Creek, CCWD developed the RM designation based on its Relicensing GIS database by measuring in 0.1-mile increments along the thalweg from the most downstream location in the river (e.g., the confluence of Beaver Creek with the NFSR is designated as BC RM 0.0.). The stream for which the river mile is provided is indicated in the RM designation (e.g., BC RM 0.0 indicating RM 0.0 on Beaver Creek).
- If the term "areas disturbed by the Project" is used in a study description, the term refers to areas where routine Project operation and maintenance is conducted. In general, these areas include at a minimum the immediate vicinity of Project facilities (e.g., powerhouses, dams, recreation areas, and Primary Project Roads) where routine Project operation and maintenance may include ground disturbing activities and vegetation clearing. Depending upon the study, a buffer area may be added. Study descriptions that refer to "areas disturbed by the Project" will include a detailed description of the area, including buffer if appropriate, in which the study will be conducted.

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