



CALAVERAS COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

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September 29, 2026

Filed via Electronic Submittal (e-File)

Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20426

SUBJECT: North Fork Stanislaus River Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. 2409
Request for Authorization to Use the Traditional Licensing Process
to Relicense the Project and Request for Modification to Site Visit Requirement

Dear Secretary Reese:

Pursuant to section 5.3(b) of the regulations of the Federal Energy Regulation Commission (Commission or FERC),¹ Calaveras County Water District (CCWD), owner and licensee of the North Fork Stanislaus River Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. 2409 (Project), requests authorization to use the Traditional Licensing Process (TLP), as generally provided in section 16.8 of the Commission's regulations,² for the relicensing of the Project. In addition, should FERC approve CCWD's use of the TLP, this letter requests FERC approval of a modification to the requirement at 18 C.F.R. Section 16.8(b)(3)(ii)(B) that pertain to the timing of the site visit.

BACKGROUND

The Commission issued an original 50-year license to CCWD for the Project by order dated February 8, 1982, stating:

This license is issued to the Calaveras County Water District (Licensee) of California, under Part I of the Federal Power Act ("Act"), for a period of 50 years, effective the first day of the month in which this order is issued, for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the North Fork Stanislaus River Project No. 2409, located on the North Fork Stanislaus River, Stanislaus River, Highland Creek, Beaver Creek, Silver Creek and Duck Creek in the Counties of Calaveras, Alpine, and Tuolumne, California, and affecting lands of the United States.³

The original license term for the Project expires on January 31, 2032.

¹ 18 C.F.R. § 5.3(b).

² *Id.* § 16.8.

³ *Calaveras County Water Dist.*, 18 FERC ¶ 61,124, at Ordering Paragraph (C) (1982).

The Project is located on the west slope of the northern Sierra Nevada in the North Fork Stanislaus River and mainstem Stanislaus River basins in Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Alpine counties, California. The Project has a FERC-authorized installed capacity of 258.726 megawatts and consists of two developments – New Spicer Meadow and Collierville – that collectively include four dams, two powerhouses with associated switchyards, one microturbine, recreation facilities, and appurtenant facilities, structures, and equipment. Portions of the Project are located on federal lands managed by the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service), as part of the Stanislaus National Forest, United States Department of the Interior (USDOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as part of the Sierra Resource Management Area, and USDOI, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), as part of the New Melones Reservoir Area.

On October 15, 2025, CCWD distributed to over 130 federal and state resource agencies, Native Americans, non-governmental organizations, and others potentially interested in the Project relicensing (collectively referred to as interested parties) a questionnaire requesting existing, relevant, and reasonably available information regarding the Project and resources potentially affected by the Project, potential issues to be addressed during relicensing, and a list of studies interested parties believe are needed to fill information gaps.

On October 29, 2025, CCWD met with interested parties to introduce the Project, review the overall relicensing process, and propose a series of meetings to develop descriptions of studies needed to support the relicensing. These interested parties participating in the October 29 meeting and other pre-relicensing engagement have included: Forest Service, BLM, BOR, USDOI, Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Calaveras Band of Mi-Wuk Indians, California State Water Resources Control Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Utica Water and Power Authority, Northern California Power Agency, Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, California Sportfish Protection Alliance, Friends of the River, and American Whitewater.

On September 29, 2026, concurrent with the filing of this request letter, CCWD filed with the Commission a Notice of Intent to File an Application for a New License (NOI) for the Project and an associated Pre-Application Document (PAD).

REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO USE OF THE TLP

Under section 5.3(c)(1)(ii) of the Commission's regulations,⁴ an applicant requesting to use the TLP must address the following considerations to inform the Commission's determination of whether to grant the request: (A) likelihood of timely license issuance; (B) complexity of the resource issues; (C) level of anticipated controversy; (D) relative cost of the TLP compared to the Integrated Licensing Process (ILP); (E) amount of available information and potential for significant disputes over studies; and (F) other factors believed by the applicant to be pertinent. Each of these factors is presented below, although the order of presentation has been customized in descending order of priority based on the specific circumstances of this Project.

⁴ 18 C.F.R. § 5.3(c)(1)(ii).

As detailed below, CCWD believes that the default ILP would not serve FERC's, CCWD's, and interested parties' best interests. The TLP would instead be a more appropriate, cost-effective, and efficient method for preparing and processing the license application.

Amount of Available Information and Potential for Significant Disputes over Studies

A significant amount of information is available, and study descriptions have been discussed in detail prior to the issuance of the PAD. Based on available information, which is included in the PAD, and responses from interested parties to CCWD's questionnaire, CCWD developed a list of 19 studies needed to fill information gaps. CCWD also met with interested parties on May 13, 2026, to obtain general agreement on the list. At that meeting, CCWD agreed to develop and provide interested parties with detailed study descriptions for each of the 19 studies, to meet with stakeholders to resolve any differences regarding study descriptions, to include agreed upon study descriptions in the PAD, and to make study information available to interested parties when the study was completed. To date, CCWD and interested parties have met more than 10 times. CCWD's understanding is that the interested parties have no additional comments on 14 of the 19 study descriptions, and CCWD is committed to resolving the remaining differences on the five study descriptions prior to March 2027.⁵ However, if a dispute remains on one or more of these three study descriptions following the first stage of consultation, the TLP process in section 16.8(b)(6) of the Commission's regulations can be initiated by an interested party or CCWD to seek FERC's timely resolution of the dispute on the specific study.⁶

A significant benefit of the TLP over the ILP is that, if FERC approves use of the TLP, CCWD will initiate and complete most studies in 2027, and then turn its attention to analyzing and synthesizing the information produced from the study to develop a robust and well-supported

⁵ Specifically, with respect to Study Description AR-4, *Assessment of Potential for Fish Entrainment at Project Intakes*, CDFW and Forest Service provided comments on CCWD's draft study description, but CCWD has not had time prior to issuance of the PAD to meet with interested parties to resolve differences. For Study Description AR-6, *Special-status Amphibian and Aquatic Reptile eDNA Sampling*, interested parties have no additional comments on study methods but CDFW proposed adding "suitable upland meadow/wetland habitat within the project boundary" to the study area. CCWD has not had time prior to issuance of the PAD to meet with CDFW to discuss this proposed addition. For Study Description AR-7, *ESA-Listed Amphibian and Aquatic Reptile Visual Encounter Surveys [VES]*, CDFW proposed modifications regarding Yosemite toad (*Anaxyrus canorus*), including install audio recorders at suspected breeding locations before snowmelt begins until late June to record vocalizations; adjust timing of first survey to be when breeding pools are created by snowmelt, not when snow is only present in the uplands and conduct either three VES at least two weeks apart in the first study year or two VES at least two weeks apart in the first study year and two VES surveys in the second survey year if no toads are detected in year one. As with Study Description AR-6, CCWD has not had time prior to issuance of the PAD to meet with CDFW to discuss the proposed modifications. For Study Description LU-1, *Project Roads and Trails*, interested parties have no additional comments on study methods, but the Forest Service proposed that CCWD include in the list of roads to be studied 10 additional road segments. At this time, CCWD has not agreed to include six of the road segments proposed by the Forest Service because the segments are, as identified by the Forest Service, "Shared Use Roads" (i.e., jointly used by various parties for multiple purposes), which CCWD believes are not the responsibility of a licensee to study during relicensing, and four road segments, which CCWD believes need not be studied in relicensing because CCWD does not propose under the new license to use these road segments to access facilities for routine Project operations and maintenance. For Study Description RR-1, *Project Recreation Use and Visitor Surveys*, interested parties have no additional comments on study methods, but the Forest Service has proposed that CCWD include in the study 13 additional sites/areas, including along road segments. At this time, CCWD has not agreed to include two of the proposed recreation sites because they are not Project facilities but were constructed and are maintained and operated by the Forest Service; three of the areas along road segments because they are "Shared Use Roads," and not the responsibility of a licensee to study during relicensing; eight road segments because CCWD does use or propose to use under the new license these roads segments to access facilities for routine Project operations and maintenance.

⁶ 18 C.F.R. § 16.8(b)(6).

relicensing application, complete with proposed measures to be implemented during the next license term. In contrast, under the ILP, studies will not begin until 2028, which will allow less time for CCWD's development of its relicensing application.

Complexity of Resource Issues

None of the resource issues identified in early, pre-relicensing consultation with interested parties are particularly complex. The Project does not include transmission or distribution lines, so issues related to management of these long, linear facilities, such as wildfire risk and transmission line right-of-way clearing, are not germane to the relicensing. The Project does not include any open flumes, canals, or ditches, so issues related to canal spills and stability are not relevant. The Project is not located within any tribal lands or special areas, such as refugia, national parks, wild and scenic rivers, national scenic trails, wilderness areas, or other restricted areas. With one exception, in fact, none of these restricted areas are adjacent to the Project. This one exception is a small portion of New Spicer Meadows Reservoir shoreline, which does not include any Project recreation facilities, that is immediately adjacent to the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness Area. Reservoir recreation in this area is limited to non-motorized boating. While not within the Project, Calaveras Big Trees State Park is located within the basin.

Moreover, the FERC Project Boundary does not encompass any private residences or commercial undertakings and very little private lands other than those owned by CCWD. Project dams do not impede upstream or downstream migration of anadromous fish, due to the presence of BOR's New Melones Dam located downstream of the Project, and the one Project reservoir where recreation occurs is heavily stocked with fish by CDFW. Since CCWD does not propose any significant modifications to Project works or new Project works for generation, complexities with new generation facilities are not relevant.

In addition, CCWD in its pre-relicensing engagement with interested parties has not identified any unique resource issues related to water quality, sensitive species, or historic properties. To date, all issues identified are common, familiar issues that arise routinely in hydropower relicensing proceedings in California.

Given the above, CCWD anticipates resource issues will be relatively straightforward to address during relicensing, and primarily relate to flow requirements, recreation at New Spicer Reservoir, and protection and enhancement of resources potentially affected by the Project. Most of the FERC Project Boundary is on National Forest System lands, and CCWD will continue to consult with the Forest Service during relicensing.

To facilitate consultation regarding threatened and endangered species and historic properties, CCWD requested in its NOI that FERC designate CCWD as FERC's non-federal representative for the purposes of consultation with USFWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and with Native Americans and the State Historic Preservation Officer under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. At the appropriate time in the relicensing, CCWD will consult with the California State Water Resources Control Board regarding a request for Clean Water Act

Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC), which CCWD, as lead agency, intends to support with preparation of appropriate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents.

Relative Cost of Using the TLP as Compared to the Cost of Using the ILP

CCWD and its relicensing consultant, HDR, Engineering, Inc., estimate the cost of relicensing the Project using the TLP would be about 70 to 75 percent of the cost to relicense the Project using the ILP. These cost savings are consistent with recent efforts for other relicensings in California that are using the TLP process and result primarily from difference in process cost (e.g., such as reports and FERC filings required by the ILP). Using the TLP would result in very important cost savings to CCWD, a rural non-profit local agency, as well as cost savings to stakeholders and FERC. In light of the straight-forward resource issues described above, CCWD does not believe that any party would benefit from the administrative costs that would be required under the rigorous structure of the ILP - i.e., the formal development of a study plan; FERC's formal approval of the study plan following development of proposed and revised study plans; the preparation of comments on the study plans; development of the initial and updated study reports, together with comments and formal meetings to discuss these documents; and FERC's interim decision making on proposed new and modified studies.

Level of Anticipated Controversy

CCWD does not anticipate any unusual controversy in this relicensing process. As described above, CCWD initiated early outreach within interested parties and has held over 10 meetings with resource agencies, Native American tribes, and other interested parties. The meetings have resulted in a list of potential issues to be addressed in the relicensing (See Section 4 in the PAD), and detailed study descriptions included in the PAD. Based on this initial outreach and the information described above, CCWD is not anticipating unusual controversy regarding studies.

Likelihood of Timely License Issuance

Use of the TLP will not delay issuance of the new license and may facilitate license issuance more quickly than the ILP. As described above, due to CCWD's and interested parties' pre-relicensing consultation, if FERC approves use of the TLP, CCWD will initiate and complete most studies in 2027, whereas under the ILP, CCWD will not even begin studies until 2028. Therefore, the TLP will provide more time for development of an informed and well-supported relicensing application.

In addition, one of the major differences between the TLP and ILP is that under the TLP, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping occurs after the application is filed, while under the ILP it occurs at the outset of the relicensing, immediately after the PAD is filed. CCWD believes the scoping process would be more efficient, focused, and timely under the TLP because stakeholders will have reviewed the application, including study results, rather than under the ILP when stakeholders have only the PAD.

Other Factors Believed by the Applicant to be Pertinent

As a State of California agency with responsibility and accountability to the public it serves, CCWD has carefully considered use of the TLP as compared to the ILP. CCWD has concluded that use of the TLP, as compared to the ILP, would cost less to CCWD and likely to agencies, stakeholders, and FERC, would be less demanding on CCWD's staff as well as on the staffs of interested parties, and would not adversely affect, and probably benefit, the overall relicensing process. Importantly, moreover, CCWD has concluded that focusing its resources on studies and consultation under the TLP, rather than the administrative burden of the ILP, will place its resources where they matter most: the development of a well-informed relicensing proposal that fully analyzes the environmental effects of the Project over a new license term.

AVAILABILITY OF CCWD's TLP REQUEST FOR COMMENT

Pursuant to section 5.3(d)(1) of the Commission's regulations,⁷ concurrent with the filing of its NOI and PAD, CCWD is providing a copy of this TLP request to affected resource agencies, Native American tribes, and members of the public likely to be interested in the Project. As required by section 5.3(d)(2) of the Commission's regulations,⁸ CCWD is publishing public notice of its filing of the NOI and PAD, together with this request to use the TLP, in newspapers of general circulation in Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Alpine counties, the counties in which the Project is located. By this letter and public notices, CCWD invites interested parties to comment on its request to use the TLP. All such comments must be provided to FERC no later than 30 days after the filing date of this document and should reference FERC Project No. 2409 – North Fork Stanislaus Hydroelectric Project.

REQUEST FOR SLIGHT MODIFICATION TO TIMING OF SITE VISIT

Should FERC approve CCWD's request to use the TLP, CCWD plans to offer agencies, tribes, and members of the public an opportunity to visit all Project facilities in late December 2026/early January 2027, consistent with Section 16.8(b)(3)(ii)(B) of the Commission's regulations,⁹ which requires the site visit between 30 and 60 days after FERC approves use of TLP. However, vehicle accessible to some higher elevation facilities (e.g., New Spicer Meadow Dam and North Fork Diversion Dam) at that time may be precluded due to snow conditions. If some facilities cannot be accessed during the site visit, CCWD would offer a visit to those facilities as soon as access is available. In the off chance that all Project facilities cannot be visited during the site visit, CCWD hereby requests that, with respect to any Project facilities not accessible during the time of the joint meeting, FERC approve a modification to the requirement in Section 16.8(b)(3)(ii)(B) to allow a visit to those facilities with interested parties in spring 2027 when vehicular access is possible. If approved, this request will have no effect on participation in the joint meeting CCWD proposes to hold in January 2027 because interested parties are already familiar with the Project facilities, most of which are on federal lands, as evidenced by interested parties' active participation in the development of study descriptions.

⁷ *Id.* § 5.3(d)(1).

⁸ *Id.* § 5.3(d)(2).

⁹ *Id.* § 16.8(b)(3)(ii)(B).

CCWD appreciates the Commission's consideration of the requests set forth above, and in working with Commission staff and interested parties in a successful relicensing process. If you have any questions about this notice or requests, please contact me at (209) 754-3543 or by email at michaelm@ccwd.org.

Sincerely,



Michael Minkler
General Manager
Calaveras County Water District

cc: Distribution List (via e-mail)

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California Hydropower Reform Coalition (CHRC) Kelly Catlett / Program Director kelly@hydroreform.org	Ebbotts Pass Forest Watch Megan Fiske / Environmental Advocate epfw@goldrush.com
Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC) John Buckley / Executive Director johnb@cserc.org	--
Commercial Parties	
Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) Janet Walther / Director, Hydro Licensing janet.walther@pge.com	Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) Jay Francis / District Manager JFrancis@spi-ind.com
Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) Kim Ognisty / General Counsel kimberly.ognisty@pge.com	Outdoor Adventure River Specialists (OARS) Tyler Wendt / General Manager tylerw@oars.com
Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) Ben Lloyd / Power Generation License Coordinator BALU@pge.com	Outdoor Adventure River Specialists (OARS) Clavey Wendt / Vice President claveyw@oars.com
Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) Anika Larson / Power Generation License Coordinator a9l6@pge.com	All Outdoors (AO) Scott Armstrong / Owner, Head of Operations rivers@aorafting.com
Tri-Dam Project / Tri-Dam Power Authority Summer Nicotero / General Manager snicotero@tridamproject.com	--

*Ms. Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
September 29, 2026
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