



*Giving You the
Power to Change the World*

June 25, 2019

Subject: Notice of the City of Santa Clara’s Intent to Rely on FERC’s Environmental Impact Statement, in Combination with a Supplemental Analysis Prepared by the City of Santa Clara, to Satisfy California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for Relicensing of Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 619).

Notice of the Availability of FERC’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Relicensing of Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 619).

Dear Relicensing Participant and Other Interested Parties,

The City of Santa Clara (City) hereby provides notice to the Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project (Bucks Creek Project or Project) relicensing participants and other interested parties of its intent to rely on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) for the relicensing of the Bucks Creek Project, in combination with a supplemental analysis to be prepared by the City, to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines §15221 and §15225. Compliance with CEQA is necessary for the City’s future discretionary action regarding acceptance of the new license order anticipated to be issued by FERC in early 2021 for the continued operation and maintenance of the Bucks Creek Project.

The City is the lead agency for compliance with CEQA and, as such, will be responsible for preparing the CEQA Supplement associated with the new FERC license order. The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) will be a responsible agency to the CEQA process. The State Water Board may use the CEQA document to support issuance of a Water Quality Certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act for the Bucks Creek Project.

State CEQA Guidelines §15225 provides that a lead agency (i.e., the City) may rely on a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document (i.e., FERC’s EIS) to satisfy CEQA provided that the NEPA document is circulated for public review as broadly as state law requires and its availability is noticed consistent with CEQA standards. To satisfy CEQA requirements, the City is hereby noticing the availability of FERC’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Bucks Creek Project to the relicensing participants (Attachment A).

Notice of Availability of DEIS

On June 14, 2019, FERC issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Bucks Creek Project, which was prepared in accordance with the NEPA of 1969 and FERC's regulations. The comment period on FERC's DEIS began on June 14, 2019. All comments on the DEIS must be filed by Tuesday, August 13, 2019 and should reference FERC Project No. 619. Attachment A is a copy of FERC's formal Notice of Availability.

A copy of the DEIS is available for review in the Commission's Public Reference Branch, Room 2A, located at 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20426. The DEIS also may be viewed on the Commission's web site at <http://www.ferc.gov> under the eLibrary link. Enter the docket number P-619 in the docket number field to access the document. For assistance, contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov, (866) 208-3676 (toll free), or (202) 502-8659 (TTY).

In addition to the locations where FERC has made the DEIS available for public review a copy of FERC's DEIS is available for review on the City's website at <http://www.siliconvalleypower.com/svp-and-community/projects> and at the following locations

1. City of Santa Clara, 1500 Warburton Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95050, Silicon Valley Power Offices, West Wing
2. Plumas County Library, 445 Jackson Street, Quincy, CA 95971
3. Chico Branch Library, 1108 Sherman Avenue, Chico, CA 95926
4. Oroville Branch Library, 1820 Mitchell Avenue, Oroville, CA 95966

How to Comment

Commenters are encouraged to file comments electronically using FERC's eFiling system at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/efiling.asp>. Commenters must include their name and contact information at the end of any comments. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support. In lieu of electronic filing, please send a paper copy to: Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20426. The first page of any filing should include docket number P-619-164. Comments must be filed prior to the close of the comment period on the DEIS, August 13, 2019. FERC is planning two public meetings on August 1, 2019 in Oroville, CA for the purpose of receiving verbal and/or written comments on the DEIS for the Bucks Creek Project. At the time of this notice FERC has not finalized a time or location for these meetings.

Those with comments particular to the role of the City of Santa Clara as Lead Agency, the CEQA process, or who wish to provide input in advance of the preparation of the Draft CEQA Supplement may also submit comments to the City of Santa Clara. Email comments may be sent to JDavidson@santaclaraca.gov. Please include Bucks Creek Project in the subject line and attach comments in MS Word or Adobe PDF format, and include the commenter's U.S. Postal Service mailing address. Paper comments regarding CEQA may be submitted to City of Santa Clara, Bucks Creek Project, 1500 Warburton Ave, Santa Clara, CA 95050. Attention: John Davidson, Principal Planner.

Background

FERC, under the authority of the Federal Power Act, may issue licenses for terms ranging from 40 to 50 years for the construction, operation, and maintenance of non-federal hydroelectric projects. Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and the City of Santa Clara (operating as Silicon Valley Power or SVP), as joint Licensees (collectively referred to as “Licensees” or “Applicants”), filed with FERC a Notice of Intent (NOI) to seek a new license for the existing 84.8-megawatt (MW) capacity Bucks Creek Project (FERC Project No. 619). The NOI and a Pre-Application Document (PAD) were filed by Licensees with FERC on November 15, 2013 pursuant to FERC’s Integrated Licensing Process (ILP). FERC’s ILP involves a comprehensive agency and public review process that integrates the development of license application and environmental review, including in accordance with NEPA and CEQA. The public input and review process for the Project was initiated with two public scoping meetings held on February 11, 2014 at 10am and at 7pm at the Holiday Inn in Chico, California. The City formally announced its CEQA Lead Agency role via letter to resource and land management agencies and other potential stakeholders on June 23, 2017, with a follow-up announcement to additional stakeholders on February 13, 2019.

Project Description and Location

The Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project is located on Bucks, Grizzly, and Milk Ranch Creeks, in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Plumas County, California. The 84.8-megawatt project consists of Bucks Creek and Grizzly Powerhouses owned by Pacific Gas & Electric Company and the City of Santa Clara, respectively, including a 4.2-mile-long, 115- kilovolt Grizzly Tap Transmission Line; water storage, diversion and conveyance facilities associated with the two powerhouses, including Bucks Lake, Lower Bucks Lake, Three Lakes, and Grizzly Forebay; and other associated facilities. The project is a peaking system normally operated remotely from PG&E’s Rock Creek powerhouse switching center. Operations of the project developments are coordinated to optimize the use of water, including the operations of PG&E’s other three FERC-licensed hydroelectric projects in the North Fork Feather River watershed (Project Nos. 2107, 2105, and 1962). The project affects approximately 1,539.5 acres in the Plumas National Forest administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. The licensees are not proposing to add capacity or make any major modifications to the project or its operations under the new license. There are no Government listed hazardous waste or materials sites within the project boundary.

Key Elements of the Environment Affected

The DEIS describes the primary issues associated with relicensing the proposed Bucks Creek Project as the effects of continued project operation on geology and soils, water quality, fishery resources, terrestrial resources, threatened and endangered species, recreation and land use, and cultural resources. The DEIS includes recommended environmental measures proposed by the licensees, as modified by FERC, that would adequately protect and enhance environmental resources affected by the proposed project. Project impacts will be further evaluated under CEQA in a draft supplemental analysis expected for release in the spring of 2020.

Next Steps

The City will release its Draft CEQA Supplement following release of FERC’s Final EIS for the Project. FERC’s Final EIS for the Project is expected in early 2020. Subsequent to the release of the Draft CEQA

Supplement the State Water Board is expected to issue a Draft 401 Water Quality Certification. The City will make any necessary revisions to its Draft CEQA Supplement based on: (1) FERC's Final EIS and comments received on FERC's DEIS; (2) comments received on the City's Draft CEQA Supplement; (3) conditions contained in the Draft 401 Water Quality Certification; and (4) comments received on the Draft 401 Water Quality Certification. The City will then issue a Final CEQA Supplement which will be presented to Santa Clara City Council for certification. The State Water Board will subsequently issue its Final 401 Water Quality Certification for the Bucks Creek Project.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this anticipated process, the City's role as CEQA Lead Agency, or the City's intention to rely on the FERC EIS along with a CEQA Supplement for CEQA compliance, please do not hesitate to contact John Davidson, Principal Planner at 408-615-2478 or me at 408-615-2452, RBrilliot@SantaClaraCA.gov.

Sincerely,



Reena Brilliot
Planning Manager, Community Development Department
City of Santa Clara
1500 Warburton Ave. Santa Clara, CA 95050
(direct) 408-615-2452
RBrilliot@SantaClaraCA.gov
www.santaclaraca.gov

cc.
Plumas County Clerk
Santa Clara County Clerk
State Clearinghouse

Attachment A: FERC's Notice of Availability of DEIS for the Bucks Creek Project