

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION  
Washington, D. C. 20426

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 137- 225  
– California  
Mokelumne River Hydroelectric  
Project  
Pacific Gas & Electric Company

**November 20, 2024**

VIA FERC Service

Stephanie Maggard  
Director, Power Generation  
300 Lakeside Drive  
Oakland, CA 94612

Subject: June 2024 Modification of Pulse Flows from Upper Blue Lake Dam – Forest Service 4(e) Condition 7

Dear Mrs. Maggard:

This letter is in response to your July 18, 2024 filing, notifying the Commission that you made modifications to the pulse flow releases from Upper Blue Lake Dam, as allowed by U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) 4(e) condition 7, for the benefit of Yosemite Toad breeding. Forest Service 4(e) condition 7<sup>1</sup> requires, in part, that you release from Upper Blue Lake Dam, a spring stream flow of at least 5 cubic-feet-per-second (cfs) from May 1 until up to 5 days after Salt Springs Reservoir has either stopped spilling or stopped filling, but no later than July 30. After the cessation of spilling or filling, it directs you to release flows from Upper Blue Lake Dam so that certain summer target streamflows are met, depending on water year type, for at least five days but no longer than fourteen consecutive days (a pulse flow), designed for the benefit of trout. In ‘below normal’ and ‘above normal’ water year types, a pulse flow of 40 cfs is required under license operations.

You report that surveys for Yosemite Toad showed that their breeding in Upper and Lower Blue Lake waterbodies was likely to occur in the immediate future (within

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<sup>1</sup> Order Approving Settlement Agreement and Issuing New License (97 FERC ¶ 61,031), issued October 11, 2001.

days), starting June 10, 2024, before Salt Spring Reservoir had stopped filling and before the pulse flow could commence. Given these signals, you consulted with the Ecological Resources Committee (ERC) and requested their concurrence to forego the 40 cfs pulse flow releases from Lower Blue Lake following refill, so that lake levels would remain steady and not negatively impact toad breeding. Amphibian egg masses laid in shallow water, such as near shorelines, may otherwise be at risk of dewatering as water levels change, such as during planned pulse flow releases, should in-flows not offset releases. You note that flows of 40 cfs were released from Lower Blue Lake before the end of fill, from June 9 through June 14, while lake elevations were held steady. You suggest that while the regularly scheduled pulse flow would be foregone, a pulse flow of similar magnitude and duration was provided earlier from Lower Blue Lake, before the requisite time frame, and that the earlier pulse flow would still provide similar benefits to trout.

The end of fill for Salt Springs Reservoir occurred on June 15, 2024. Toad eggs were observed at Lower Blue Lake starting on June 17, 2024, and you proposed to forego the pulse flow to the ERC via email on June 18, 2024. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conveyed its support for the modification, via email, on June 18, 2024; the California Department of Fish and Wildlife sent its support of the modification, via email on July 17, 2024; and the Forest Service provided its concurrence, via letter dated July 2, 2024. You documented continued breeding in both Upper and Lower Blue Lake until July 11.

Forest Service 4(e) Condition 7 permits changes to the release schedule and rates it describes as targets, as long as the changes are approved by the Forest Service, made in consultation with the ERC, and are made in response to results of aquatic ecological monitoring. Based on the provided documentation, you correctly applied the flexibility permitted by condition 7, and the modifications were justified by the breeding data and responsive to Yosemite Toad vulnerabilities. As such, your actions were made in compliance with your license conditions.

Thank you for your notification. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Katie Schmidt at (415) 369-3348 or [katherine.schmidt@ferc.gov](mailto:katherine.schmidt@ferc.gov).

Sincerely,

Katie Schmidt  
Aquatic Resources Branch  
Division of Hydropower Administration  
and Compliance