

## **Negative Declaration**

### **Pacific Gas and Electric Company Relief Reach – Kennedy Meadows Riparian Restoration and Streambank Stabilization Project**

### **Spring Gap-Stanislus Hydroelectric Project Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project No. 2130**

#### **Lead Agency:**

State Water Resources Control Board  
Division of Water Rights  
1001 I Street, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
P.O. Box 2000  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Attn: Allan Laca (916) 322-8469 or  
[Allan.Laca@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Allan.Laca@waterboards.ca.gov)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This Negative Declaration (ND) and the associated Initial Study evaluate the potential impacts of implementing Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E's) Relief Reach – Kennedy Meadows Riparian Restoration and Streambank Stabilization Project (Kennedy Meadows Project or Project) in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Kennedy Meadows Project will occur along a 3,000-linear-foot reach of the Middle Fork Stanislaus River identified as "Kennedy Meadows Reach"<sup>1</sup> (also referred to as the Project Reach) on land owned by Tuolumne County, California. The property is surrounded by public land managed by the United States Department of Agriculture - Forest Service (USFS). Kennedy Meadows is located along Highway 108, approximately 57 miles east of Sonora and 50 miles south of South Lake Tahoe at an elevation of approximately 6,500 feet above mean sea level. The Project Reach is located approximately 2.5 miles downstream of PG&E's Relief Dam. Relief Dam, constructed in 1910, is on Summit Creek. Kennedy Creek joins Summit Creek approximately one mile downstream from Relief Dam and upstream of the Project Reach, forming the Middle Fork Stanislaus River. A map is included in the attached Initial Study (IS) for the Project.

PG&E is required by its current Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) License for the Spring Gap-Stanislus Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2130) to evaluate riparian and streambank conditions in the Kennedy Meadows Reach and to develop and implement

---

<sup>1</sup> The Kennedy Meadows Reach is within the Relief Reach, which extends from Relief Dam to Donnell's Reservoir in PG&E's studies for the relicensing of the Spring Gap-Stanislus Hydroelectric Project.

vegetation restoration and streambank stabilization measures to improve riparian vegetation and habitat, aquatic habitat, and bank stability. PG&E has completed several years of studies to inform the Project development.

## **PROPOSED PROJECT**

The main components of the Project include: (1) construction of streambank stabilization bioengineering design elements (including improvement and planting of riparian vegetation) in seven treatment areas within the Project Reach; (2) implementation of best management practices (BMPs) and avoidance, protection, and minimization measures (APMMs) for potential construction impacts; and (3) implementation of a maintenance and monitoring plan (MMP).

### **Stream Restoration and Enhancement Design Elements**

Seven locations were selected for bank stabilization and riparian restoration treatments within the Project Reach. The seven locations (treatment areas) have vulnerable or unstable streambanks and lack riparian vegetation cover. Please see attached IS for a map of treatment area locations, as well as proposed treatments.

The proposed treatments include a combination of various bioengineering techniques, including, but not limited to: streambank grading, wood and rock placement, and native vegetation planting. Toe rock additions and root wad series are recommended in areas with more recent and severe active streambank erosion, and where flow velocities and shear forces are higher during high flows compared to the other treatment areas. Areas with lower flow velocities and shear forces will be treated with riparian vegetation planting. To protect the restored vegetation and log structures and promote the successful establishment of riparian vegetation along the streambanks, split rail fencing will be installed in two areas at the downstream end of the Project Reach on the east meadow. These fenced areas are separated by an approximate 80-foot bank section without fencing, which is currently used for river access by recreationists and cattle. Fencing will focus access in this section, and reduce pressure on the restored areas.

### **Best Management Practices and Avoidance, Protection, and Minimization Measures**

This section describes BMPs and APMMs that PG&E and/or their designated contractor will use during implementation of the Kennedy Meadows Project. The Kennedy Meadows Project has been designed to limit potential impacts to environmental resources. The following BMPs and APMMs are specific to the Kennedy Meadows Project and include standard PG&E adopted measures.

- General Construction Measures
- Equipment Maintenance
- Hazardous Materials Management and Spill Prevention
- Water Quality Protection
- Concrete Waste Management
- Fire Prevention
- General Wildlife Avoidance and Protection
- Nesting Bird and Bat Avoidance and Protection
- Stream Diversion and Dewatering
- Aquatic Species Protection
- Aquatic Species Recovery and Relocation
- Riparian and Meadow Habitats and Wetlands Protection
- Cultural Resource Protection
- Recreation Resource Protection
- Turbidity Monitoring

## Maintenance and Monitoring Plan

An MMP has been developed to ensure the success of the Kennedy Meadows Project (see Appendix C of attached IS). The MMP includes the following:

- Purpose of the MMP and need for maintenance and monitoring.
- Success criteria with measurable attributes for establishment of new riparian habitat and stabilized streambanks.
- Monitoring schedule: Baseline and Years 1, 2, and 5 (or until success criteria are met).
- If success criteria are not met, PG&E will consult with agencies to determine appropriate next actions, which could include more plantings, bank treatments, or other actions.
- No action if agencies determine that the restoration and enhancement objectives of the Kennedy Meadows Project have been achieved.
- Maintenance schedule: Multiple times per year in Years 1 and 2, twice per year in Years 3 and 4, and then once per year every five years and in the spring of wet years through the duration of the FERC license.
- Maintenance and monitoring methods.
- Reporting and consultation.

## FINDINGS AND DETERMINATION

The Kennedy Meadows Project as proposed by PG&E will avoid or reduce any negative environmental impacts to a point where no significant impact on the environment will occur.

There is no substantial evidence in light of the whole record before the public agency that the Kennedy Meadows Project may have a significant impact on the environment.

On the basis of this evaluation, the State Water Board concludes:

- a) Implementation of the Kennedy Meadows Project will not degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.
- b) Implementation of the Kennedy Meadows Project will not have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable.
- c) Implementation of the Kennedy Meadows Project will not have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

Once approved, this Negative Declaration will be filed pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines.

---

Leslie Grober  
Deputy Director

Date

SEP 11 2017