PCWA-L-244

# Placer County Water Agency

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November 30, 2005



Office of the Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, Northeast
Washington D.C. 20426

RE: Project No. 2079-054
Middle Fork American River Project
Placer County Water Agency

Dear Secretary:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the letter that we received on October 24, 2005, from George H. Taylor, Chief, Biological Resources Branch, Division of Hydropower Administration and Compliance. In this letter we were requested to provide a report on the cause of the delay in the low-flow warning at our operations center. Mr. Taylor's letter was responding to our letter dated July 29, 2005, by which we reported a violation of the minimum flow release requirement that occurred on June 27, 2005, at Hell Hole Dam.

Even though the violation began sometime between 7:45 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., the low flow alarm did not come in at our main powerhouse, Ralston Powerhouse, which is normally staffed during the day, until about 10:31 a.m. The minimum required release on June 27, 2005, was 20 cfs. However, the alarm was not transmitted to Ralston Powerhouse until the stream stage at the gauging station below Hell Hole Dam had dropped to 4.07 feet which corresponded to a flow of 17.7 feet. A stage of 4.11 feet corresponds to a flow of 20.1 cfs, while 4.10 feet indicates 19.5 cfs. During tests conducted on August 25, 2005 at this gauging station, the low flow alarm came in at 19.5 cfs. The technician who performed the tests was not able to identify the reason the alarm did not occur at 19.5 cfs on June 27, 2005.

The existing mechanism that is used to detect a low flow condition and initiate an alarm at this particular station is a shaft with a lobe that rotates as the stage changes. The lobe operates a microswitch to indicate that a low flow condition is present. It has been

reported to me that the shaft – lobe – microswitch combination is difficult to set to the desired precision. We are presently planning to replace the water level transmitter at this gauging station in 2006 with a new transmitter that will allow more precise alarming of a low flow condition.

If you have any questions, please call me at (530) 885-6917, or you may send me an email at sjones@pcwa.net.

Sincerely,

PLACER COUNTY WATER AGENCY

Stephen J. Jones
Power System Manager

Enclosure: Seven copies of letter

cc: David Breninger
Larry Corsini
Philip Scordelis
Edward Tiedemann
Mal Toy