

## DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

1416 NINTH STREET  
P.O. BOX 944209  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94244-2090



(916) 653-4875

July 12, 1993

Mr. Roger Patterson, Regional Director  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
2800 Cottage Way  
Sacramento, California 95825-1898

Dear Mr. Patterson:

Draft Environmental Assessment (Second Revision) for the  
Red Bluff Diversion Dam Pilot Pumping Plant

Thank you for the opportunity to review the subject document. The proposed project is for the construction of a pilot pumping plant at the base of the existing Red Bluff Diversion Dam. The facility will consist of two Archimedes screw pumps, one helical pump, and an open bay for the future installation of an additional pump. There will also be evaluation facilities incorporated into the project which will allow detailed biological and engineering studies of the pumps. Construction is scheduled to begin in April 1994 and will be completed by December of the same year. This project has been the subject of numerous meetings attended by our staff and is strongly supported by the Department.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) is generally accurate in describing the existing conditions at the site, the potential for impacts, and recommends appropriate mitigation measures for those identified impacts. The only area of concern we have is with the discussion of possible channel modifications for developing sweeping flows past the pumping plant intake. The lack of specificity regarding the precise mechanism for attaining sweeping flows is understandable because of the need to first construct the plant before a particular modification can be identified. The EA states that, depending on which channel modification(s) are needed, a separate EA may need to be prepared to address environmental impacts. We will be available to work with Reclamation's staff in this analysis and the selection of an alternative to achieve the sweeping flows with a minimum of additional impacts to the river or its associated fish and wildlife. We have reviewed the Reclamation's application for a Corp of Engineers' permit for the channel modifications and attach our permit review comments for your information.

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The EA discusses, under the No Action alternative, the historic condition of having the gates raised for six months of the year, from November 1 until April 30. Tables 6 and 7 present information on the No Action alternative with six months of "gates-up" operation. It also discusses the requirements of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Biological Opinion for the long-term operation of the Central Valley Project (pages 1, 19, 20, and 21). The Biological Opinion requirement that the gates at Red Bluff be kept in the raised position for eight months of the year beginning in the fall of 1994 applies irrespective of whether or not the pilot pumping plant is constructed. To avoid confusing some readers who might conclude that the gates will be raised for two additional months only if the pumping plant is built, we suggest including the text from page 54 of the Biological Opinion which states:

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6. Pursuant to the following schedule, the gates of Red Bluff Diversion Dam must remain in the raised position to provide unimpeded upstream and downstream passage for winter-run chinook salmon:
  - a. The gates of Red Bluff Diversion Dam must remain in the raised position through at least April 30, 1993.
  - b. The gates of Red Bluff Diversion Dam must be raised on November 1, 1993 and remain in the raised position through at least April 30, 1994.
  - c. On September 15 of each year commencing in 1994, the gates of Red Bluff Diversion Dam must be raised and remain in the raised position from September 15 through at least May 14.

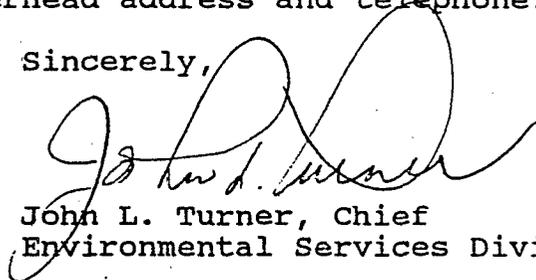
NMFS will review proposals for intermittent gate closures of up to 10 days one time per year on a case-by-case basis. Reclamation recently reinitiated consultation with the NMFS for activities related to construction of the pilot pumping plant but the request was not to change the essence of the above schedule.

We appreciate all of Reclamation's efforts at bringing this project closer to reality and look forward to continued cooperation as the process moves towards construction and operation.

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If you have any questions or wish to discuss our comments in greater detail please contact Mr. Dick Daniel, Environmental Program Manager, Environmental Services Division, Department of Fish and Game, at the above letterhead address and telephone.

Sincerely,



John L. Turner, Chief  
Environmental Services Division

cc: Mr. Dick Daniel  
Department of Fish and Game  
Sacramento, California

Mr. Jim Smith  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Red Bluff, California

Mr. Chris Mobley  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Santa Rosa, California

Mr. Terry Mills  
Department of Fish and Game  
Sacramento, California