DATE: March 22, 2021
TO: Agencies, organizations, and interested parties
FROM: California Department of Water Resources
SUBJECT: Notice of Intent to Adopt an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND)

This serves as the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Notice of Intent to Adopt the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and State CEQA Guidelines.

PROJECT TITLE: South SWP Hydropower Relicensing, FERC Project No. 2426 (Project)

PROJECT LOCATION: The South SWP Hydropower is located along the West Branch of the State Water Project (SWP) in Los Angeles County, California, between the towns of Castaic and Gorman.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The State of California, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), and the United States government own the land, and DWR and LADWP (Licensees) operate the South SWP Hydropower facilities, an existing power recovery project that includes existing hydroelectric facilities, access roads, maintenance areas, recreation areas, rights-of-way, and other supporting facilities. The Licensees operate the South SWP Hydropower under an existing Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license that is scheduled to expire on January 31, 2022. The Licensees have used the Integrated Licensing Process in seeking a new license from FERC pursuant to the Federal Power Act. Under this CEQA analysis, the proposed Project is the continued operation of the South SWP Hydropower, including the hydroelectric, recreation, and supporting facilities, in accordance with the Licensees’ proposed terms and conditions for inclusion in the new FERC license, as described in the Licensees’ Final License Application, as amended.

The Licensees’ proposed changes to the existing South SWP Hydropower include administrative changes that do not involve any physical changes and potential FERC-required protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures, such as upgrades to existing recreation facilities, vegetation management, plant and terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species protections, cultural resources protection and management, and other environmental measures. The proposed administrative changes include: (1) a change in the FERC Project boundary, resulting in an overall reduction in land area designated in the license that encompasses all existing facilities and lands necessary for the operation and maintenance of the South SWP Hydropower; (2) addition of the existing Quail Detention Embankment as a licensed facility; (3) addition of an existing lake level gage; (4) designation of access roads currently maintained by the Licensees that are used exclusively for accessing the South SWP Hydropower facilities; (5) addition of the existing Los Alamos Campground in the proposed Project boundary; and (6) removal of
the Warne Transmission Line, owned by Southern California Edison, from the license
Project description.

DWR, as the lead agency, has initiated the CEQA process to inform DWR's
discretionary decision on whether to approve the proposed Project and accept the new
license when issued, request rehearing on a new license when issued or otherwise
challenge its issuance, or reject the new license.

SIGNIFICANT PROJECT IMPACTS DISCUSSED IN DOCUMENT: The IS/MND did
not identify any significant and unavoidable impacts; mitigation was incorporated, where
necessary, to reduce all potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD: The IS/MND will be circulated for a 30-day public review
period beginning on March 22, 2021, and concluding on April 21, 2021. In accordance
with the State CEQA Guidelines, any comments concerning the findings of the IS/MND
must be submitted in writing and received by DWR no later than 5:00 p.m. (Pacific
Standard Time) on April 21, 2021, in order to be considered. Please include a name,
address, and telephone number of a contact person for all future correspondence on
this subject. Please mail or email your written comments or questions to DWR's contact
listed below.

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AVAILABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION: Once circulated, the
IS/MND may be viewed at the following locations:

- On the web: http://south-swp-hydropower-relicensing.com/
- Public Library: Old Town Newhall Library
  24500 Main Street
  Santa Clarita, California 91321
  (Please check with the library for hours of operation, including
  potential closures due to COVID-19 restrictions. Visitors are
  advised to follow the California Department of Public Health
  guidelines, as well as Los Angeles County guidelines.)

For more information on the Project, or if you would like to request a hard copy, please
contact Lonn Maier, DWR's Environmental Program Manager at (916) 557-8151, or by
email at Lonn.Maier@water.ca.gov.