



FRIENDS OF THE EEL RIVER

Working for the recovery of our Wild & Scenic River, its fisheries and communities.

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Potter Valley Project Surrender and Decommissioning the Best Path for Eel River Fisheries

The Two Basin Partnership should withdraw their Notice of Intent to relicense and support the quickest and surest path to dam removal on the Eel River.

Friends of the Eel River has so far supported the Two Basin Solution framework as the most promising and rapid way to reach an equitable resolution to the problems presented by the Potter Valley Project (Project).

However, it is now evident the effort to implement a Two Basin Solution by relicensing the Project will not succeed. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) surrender and decommissioning process is now the surest and quickest way to secure removal of the Eel River dams and recovery of Eel River salmon and steelhead.

"PG&E's refusal to pay for the costs of relicensing creates a huge hurdle. Even if the Partners somehow came up with the tens of millions needed to finance their relicensing process, several other obstacles remain," said Alicia Hamann, Executive Director for Friends of the Eel River. "The lack of meaningful support from Russian River interests, which stand to benefit the most from this proposal, means there is yet no proposal to monetize any future water diversions, and thus no way to support the costs of maintaining a diversion."

It is also very clear that the Project's status quo cannot be sustained. Flows have been out of compliance with the Reasonable and Preferred Alternative (RPA) flow schedule more often than not for the last decade. When the Project license expires in April of 2022, so does the RPA flow schedule. Any annual license that FERC grants to continue operation of the Project will have to include terms and conditions significantly more protective of Eel River fisheries than those provided by the RPA over the last thirty years.

"Eel River fisheries are in crisis," Hamann continued. "The Project operations jeopardize the continued survival of Eel River chinook salmon and steelhead, which are both listed under the federal Endangered Species Act as Threatened." Removal of Scott Dam is essential if Northern California summer steelhead, now listed by the state of California as Endangered under the state Endangered Species Act, are to have any real hope of recovery.

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There are also serious concerns about the infrastructure of the Project. This summer's extreme drought has revealed the real risk that Scott Dam's needle valve, the only low-level outlet for the Lake Pillsbury reservoir, may be wrecked by sediment, rendering the entire project useless to provide any water at all, whether for fisheries or irrigation.

Further delay only heightens the unacceptable risks to the Eel River and its fisheries. Dam removal is inevitable, surrender and decommissioning is the most sensible path to that inevitability. A just resolution can still be achieved by recognizing that reality. We believe that at this point a Two Basin Solution can only be reached through the surrender and decommissioning process.

Withdrawal of the Two Basin Partner's Notice of Intent to relicense the Project is the best course of action at this point.

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