



**COUNTY OF LAKE  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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February 27, 2024

Deputy Director Kristopher Tjernell  
Department of Water Resources  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Request for Support**

Dear Deputy Director Tjernell,

As your Department is aware, PG&E has initiated the FERC surrender process for the Potter Valley Project, with the stated intent to drain Lake Pillsbury and remove Scott Dam. The loss of this body of water has created enormous uncertainty for Lake County. The efforts surrounding the decommissioning process so far have been focused on the potential benefits or concerns for downstream users, both in the Eel River and Russian River basins, even though Scott Dam and Lake Pillsbury are in Lake County. The potential impacts this loss of water resources could have here, on our communities, environment, and resources are not fully understood.

The Potter Valley Project, through its water storage and trans-basin water diversion, has connected our entire region, both urban and rural, into one impacted area. For over a hundred years this region has developed based on the existence of these water resources. Especially with the reality of persistent drought, for any solution to be successful it must comprehensively address the loss of this water supply in all affected communities throughout the Potter Valley Project.

While Lake County remains concerned that PG&E has not demonstrated a plan showing the dams can be safely removed without adversely affecting the environment and impacted communities, the County recognizes it is critical to understand what the resultant impacts and needs would be in such an eventuality. Lake County hereby requests support from the Department of Water Resources to conduct a technical assessment to estimate the impacts of the decommissioning process, including dam removal, and evaluate potential adaptations, provide cost estimates, and evaluate other strategies for implementing mitigations. The information this assessment would provide is critical for upcoming State and Federal proceedings pertaining to the

decommissioning, as they can inform decision making for the applicable bodies and interested parties.

### Proposed Scope of Work

The removal of Scott Dam and loss of Lake Pillsbury will have an immediate impact on access to water for the surrounding community that has not been explored in any depth. There are other significant impacts connected to the loss of this water supply that should be studied as well. Below are general areas Lake County proposes to study, especially in light of persistent drought:

- a. Identify Lake County Resources for Assessment of Potential Impacts.
  - 1) *Water Supply* - there has been concern expressed that wells in the area servicing private and USFS interests may go dry if groundwater is no longer available. It is likely Lake Pillsbury impacts the depth and recharge of the groundwater supply in the watershed. Potential impacts and mitigations should be studied.
  - 2) *Wildfire Suppression* – the US Forest Service has indicated Lake Pillsbury serves as an important water resource in fire suppression. Potential impacts, alternatives, and mitigations should be studied.
  - 3) *Ecosystem and Environment* – the area around Lake Pillsbury has developed over the last century dependent on the lake as a resource. Wildlife, fish, vegetation, and the surrounding community currently rely on it. Potential impacts, alternatives, and mitigations should be studied to ensure the area is properly restored.
  - 4) *Utilities* – are there potential impacts to services resulting from the decommissioning process?
  - 5) *Recreation* – current access to recreation focuses on Lake Pillsbury related activities. Potential impacts and alternatives should be studied.
  - 6) *Sediment* – PG&E has indicated it intends to leave most of the sediment and construction debris on site. If these materials are not mobilized in a careful, measured manner, such as in a major storm event, there could be detrimental consequences. Potential impacts, alternatives, and mitigations should be studied.
  - 7) *Infrastructure* - The decommissioning process entails significant movement of heavy equipment and material across a road network that already faces significant strain. Potential impacts, alternatives, and mitigations should be studied.
- b. Identify Potter Valley Project Decommissioning and Climate Change Scenarios – Perform modelling of existing conditions, plus one or two decommissioning scenarios. Perform Climate Change modelling and include scenarios that explore extreme drought and flood conditions in the Upper Eel River watershed.
- c. Evaluate Impacts to Resources – These technical evaluations could include hydrological, hydraulic, and sediment modeling of the Upper Eel River and Lake

Pillsbury; recreational impacts analysis; GIS and bathymetry data analysis; economic modeling; etc.

- d. Develop Adaptation Strategies for Identified Impacts.
- e. Evaluate Adaptation Strategies for Potential Implementation – Evaluate factors like technical complexity, cost, environmental concerns, social, and other considerations related to the implementation of adaptation strategies.
- f. Report Findings – Summarize the process, results, and key findings.

Proposed Cost

Based on early, preliminary discussions, Lake County anticipates the need for approximately \$700,000.00 to complete the proposed assessment.

<b>Task Description</b>	<b>Funding Amount</b>
Task 1 – Project Administration	\$35,000
Task 2 – Existing Condition Evaluation	\$140,000
Task 3 – Impact Evaluation	\$525,000

Proposed Timeframe

The County seeks to complete this assessment as quickly as possible, prioritizing components most beneficial to upcoming State and Federal Proceedings. It is anticipated that this assessment can be completed over the next 2 years.

Lake County appreciates the efforts your Department has made to work with Lake County and help ensure solutions are developed that address our needs. Regardless of the decommissioning process outcomes, the information the proposed assessment would provide will be valuable not just for Lake County, but for all parties involved in the process.

Sincerely,

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Bruno Sabatier, Chair  
Lake County Board of Supervisors