

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Certified copy of portion of proceedings, Meeting of June 5, 2018

RESOLUTION NO. 18-56

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT'S POSITION REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE POTTER VALLEY PROJECT ON THE EEL RIVER

WHEREAS, the Potter Valley Project, currently owned by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), was constructed on the main stem of the Eel River in Mendocino County between 1905 and 1922 to generate hydroelectric power, and through its operation serves as an inter-basin transfer of water from the Eel River basin to the Russian River basin; and

WHEREAS, the benefits of water diversions to the Russian River have come at the expense of substantial downstream impacts to the Eel River and its fisheries; and

WHEREAS, the main stem of the Eel River flows through Humboldt County for approximately 81 river miles before discharging into the Pacific Ocean; and

WHEREAS, the export of water from North Coast watersheds is one of Humboldt County's most significant water resource policy issues; and

WHEREAS, the ecosystem services and beneficial uses of the Eel River are a vital part of Humboldt County's core community values; and

WHEREAS, residents and communities within Humboldt County depend on the Eel River for water supply, fishing, recreation, and many other uses; and

WHEREAS, the County of Humboldt recognizes the importance of the Eel River to the Wiyot Tribe, Bear River Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Round Valley Indian Tribes, and other affected tribes for ceremonial, medicinal, practical, and subsistence uses; and

WHEREAS, the Potter Valley Project has contributed to habitat degradation, declining fish populations, economic losses, and loss of recreational opportunities within Humboldt County; and

WHEREAS, the Potter Valley Project has redistributed the natural wealth of the Eel River to the detriment of downstream communities in Humboldt County; and

WHEREAS, the Potter Valley Project has deprived the residents of Humboldt County from fully utilizing the resources of the Eel River; and

WHEREAS, PG&E's hydropower license for the Potter Valley Project expires on April 14, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Jared Huffman convened an ad hoc committee of interested parties in 2017 to work toward a two-basin solution that addresses issues and concerns in the Eel River and Russian River watersheds; and

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WHEREAS, PG&E announced, on May 10, 2018, its intent to put the Potter Valley Project up for auction; and

WHEREAS, the County of Humboldt has a duty, as a political subdivision of the State of California, to protect and restore the natural resources within County boundaries.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE HUMBOLDT COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ADOPTS THE FOLLOWING POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE POTTER VALLEY PROJECT:

- The County of Humboldt believes that decommissioning and full or partial removal of the Potter Valley Project is inevitable due to the aging infrastructure, low power production, and high cost of upgrading the facility to comply with current dam safety and environmental regulations.
- The County of Humboldt believes that restoration of fish populations in the Eel River will be best achieved through removal of Scott Dam to allow volitional fish passage to spawning and rearing habitat historically used by migrating salmonids.
- The County of Humboldt will actively participate in the hydropower re-licensing process administered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Congressman Jared Huffman's Potter Valley Project Ad Hoc Committee, and discussions exploring the potential transfer of the Potter Valley Project to a regional (multi-county) entity.
- The County of Humboldt recognizes that the Potter Valley Project provides tangible benefits to other counties and supports a collaborative approach to solving the regional issues and concerns.
- The County of Humboldt supports Congressman Huffman's call for a two-basin solution with co-equal goals and believes that consideration of Russian River water users' interests will be essential to achieving a comprehensive solution.
- The County of Humboldt will advocate strongly on behalf of the water users and natural resources within Humboldt County for water supply reliability, fish populations that support sustainable harvest opportunities, and full restoration of beneficial uses within the Eel River.
- The County of Humboldt will advocate for elimination of summer and fall water diversions and restoration of the Eel River's natural flow regime to restore and enhance fisheries, water quality, water supply, and recreational opportunities.
- The County of Humboldt will advocate for thorough consideration of the decommissioning alternative through the hydropower re-licensing process.