

DOUG LAMALFA

1ST DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES

CHAIRMAN OF WESTERN CAUCUS

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0501**

December 19, 2025

The Honorable Laura V. Swett  
Chairwoman  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20426

The Honorable David Rosner  
Commissioner  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20426

The Honorable Lindsay S. See  
Commissioner  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20426

The Honorable Judy W. Chang  
Commissioner  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, NE  
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The Honorable David A. LaCerte  
Commissioner  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20426

Re: Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project (FERC Docket Nos. P-77-332; P-77-000)  
Final Application for Surrender of License  
Final Application for Non-Project Use of Project Lands

Dear Chairwoman Swett and Commissioners:

I am writing in opposition to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approving the decommissioning and removal of the Scott Dam and Cape Horn Dam, both which are part of the Potter Valley Project, as requested by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E).

Scott Dam created Lake Pillsbury, which has a maximum storage capacity of 80,500 acre-feet, and Cape Horn Dam created Van Arsdale Reservoir, which can store up to 700 acre-feet. These reservoirs are critical to Northern California as they provide water supplies for agricultural, residential, and commercial use, as well as support firefighting activities in the region and across the Golden State.

The removal of these dams would have profound, far-reaching, and irreparable adverse consequences for the towns, farms, and natural environment in Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, and Sonoma counties and across Northern California. Elimination of these reservoirs would:

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<http://lamalfa.house.gov>

- Potentially result in the dropping of the local water table, rendering wells inoperable thereby forcing homeowners and businesses into expensive redrilling actions that they may not be able to afford;
- Potentially have devastating impacts to private property owners adjacent to or near these facilities as land shifts and collapses due to lack of water pressure around the reservoirs' perimeters;
- Destroy farming in the region, estimated to generate more than \$1 billion in economic output, by removing the primary sources of irrigation water used to grow the food we all eat that is produced in the area;
- Jeopardize first responders and firefighters' ability to fight fires by removing key sources of water that have been used in the past to combat wildfires, such as the 2020 August Complex Fire, thereby increasing risk to life and private property in the region and beyond; and,
- Threaten protected fish species in both the Eel River and Russian River through the rapid releases of potentially thousands of cubic feet of sediment that has built up behind these dams resulting in mass die-off of fish and destruction of riparian habitat.

97% of the nearby Mendocino National Forest has been burned by wildfire and is in an area that remains prone to wildfire risks. The reservoirs in the Potter Valley Project, including Lake Pillsbury, being drained will result in a lack of water to fight regional fires, including water that is directly responsible for saving structures and homes next to and nearby the lake. Furthermore, it is my understanding that removal of these dams will likely create a dangerous up to 2-hour delay for meaningful aerial wildfire response, with planes and helicopters having to find other reservoirs further away to "dip" into to get water to fight fires. This delay will have far reaching, dangerous, and expensive consequences causing reductions in direct attack capacity, increased time between water replenishment for aerial attacks on wildfire, and worsening conditions on the ground that will make the area even more prone to catastrophic wildfire. These consequences will be felt across California's coastal plane, and in the surrounding counties that have in the past, and will again, rely on these reservoirs for regional firefighting efforts.

It is also important to note that California is in a critical power shortage and that the state has done little to address this inconvenient truth. California has failed to add more baseload power to the grid and instead has removed generation capacity over the years while mandating a move to 100% electric cars and trucks in the future, which will only put more demand on the state's already stressed electrical power system. Scott Dam can generate up to 9.4 megawatts of electricity. The Scott and Cape Horn Dams should be preserved – dismantling them would be shortsighted and only exacerbates power shortages and increases costs in this region and across the state.

Finally, I call on FERC to take to heart the lessons learned from the Klamath River dam removals. The removal of these dams lowered local and regional groundwater tables, caused massive land shifts and collapses around the emptied reservoirs, created wide mudflats in the former reservoirs susceptible to noxious and invasive vegetation growth where wildlife has also become stuck and died, deposited hundreds of thousands of tons of muddy sediment and debris downstream on the Klamath River destroying riparian habitat, and resulted in a massive young salmon die-off. I fear the exact same thing will happen if Scott Dam and Cape Horn Dam are

removed. The information submitted to FERC does not adequately address these and other impacts and there appears to be no clear or viable remediation plans or path forward to provide regional water supplies for families, towns, farms, and combating wildfires. This is unacceptable.

Accordingly, I strongly oppose FERC approving this request – or taking any other action – that would result in the removal of Scott Dam and Cape Horn Dam. By rejecting PG&E's application, this allows stakeholders from across the spectrum and region to identify or develop alternatives to removal of these dams to protect the local agricultural economy, ensure access to water for firefighting, and protect the environment.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doug LaMalfa". The signature is stylized with a large "D" and "L".

DOUG LaMALFA  
Member of Congress