

December 2, 2014

Regular Meeting

Item #13f

County Counsel

Temporary Urgency

Change Petition -

Bridgeport

Reservoir

December 2, 2014

Ms. Barbara Evoy, Deputy Director
Division of Water Rights
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

Re: Walker River Irrigation District Petition for Temporary Urgency Change License 9407 (Application 1389)

Dear Ms. Evoy:

This letter relates to the Walker River Irrigation District's petition for temporary reduction in Board-ordered mandatory minimum flows in the East Walker River below Bridgeport Reservoir (the Petition). Currently, the District's license requires the release of at least 20 cfs during normal conditions and 30 cfs during certain freezing conditions. The license also requires maintenance of a minimum reservoir pool. The District is seeking to have the minimum flows temporarily reduced to 10 cfs (through February of 2015) in order to address a diminished pool in the reservoir.

Both Bridgeport Reservoir and the East Walker River are significant resources within Mono County, supporting wildlife, fisheries, habitat, recreation, and other values. As such, Mono County understands the dilemma expressed by the District in its Petition of trying to balance the needs of both the reservoir and the river downstream during low water years.

The County submits this letter not to support or oppose the Petition, but rather to raise questions that should be answered in its evaluation. The County also understands (and appreciates) that State Board staff has also raised several of these issues. Specifically, the County's questions are as follows:

1. What anticipated impact will the proposed temporary flow reduction have on fisheries below the Bridgeport dam?
2. If the Petition is granted, will impacts to habitat and the fishery below the dam be monitored throughout the period of the reduction and, if so, in what manner?
3. If the petition is granted, does the reduction in flow automatically continue until February 28, 2015, or may it be modified or eliminated by the Board if no longer needed for the benefit of the reservoir (e.g., due to increased precipitation or other changes)?

4. If the temporary reduction may be modified or eliminated prior to February 28, how and based on what criteria would a determination regarding when to do so be made?
5. Are irrigation changes being considered as an additional means to address the minimum pool requirement in Bridgeport Reservoir in the future, or is the sole remedy being considered the proposed reduction in streamflow? Specifically, what longer-term solutions to maintain the health of the reservoir and river are being considered should another low water year follow this one?

The County appreciates the State Board's consideration of these questions, and would like to be included in any correspondence regarding the Petition. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Robert C. Bryan, Manager, Walker River Irrigation District
Gordon DePaoli, Counsel for Walker River Irrigation District
Nancy Murray, Counsel for Cal. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
Steve Parminter, Cal. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife