



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

MAGIC VALLEY REGION
324 South 417 East, Suite 1
Jerome, Idaho 83338

Brad Little / Governor
Ed Schriever / Director

November 20, 2020

Director Gary Spackman
Idaho Department of Water Resources
Western Regional Office
2735 W. Airport Way
Boise, ID 83705-5082

Randall C. Budge
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P.O. Box 1391
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Re: IDFG Response to Rule 40.05(g) Comment Solicitation – Water Right Applications-for-Permit Nos. 63-34403, 63-34652, 63-34897 & 63-34900—Cat Creek Energy, LLC

Dear Director Spackman,

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game's (IDFG) mission is to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage Idaho's fish and wildlife resources for the public interest (Idaho Code 36-103). Accordingly, IDFG reviewed Application-for-Permit Nos. 63-34403, 63-34652, 63-34897 and 63-34900 (Applications) submitted by Cat Creek Energy, LLC (CCE) to appropriate public waters from the South Fork Boise River for power generation and diversion to storage for irrigation, municipal, domestic, industrial, commercial mitigation, and aquifer recharge uses (collectively CCE's proposed Project). Because CCE's Applications contained few Project details, IDFG filed protests per Idaho Code §42-203A(4) to offer the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) technical assistance with decision making and recommendations to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse Project effects on public interest fish and wildlife resources and related recreation.

Conserving fish and wildlife resources through IDWR's water appropriation process is critical to Idaho's public interest, noting that fish and wildlife resources supported by the South Fork Boise River, its reservoirs, and surrounding lands provide significant local recreation and economic activity. The 30 October 2020 letter from Mr. Randall C. Budge of Racine Olson, PLLC on CCE's behalf invited IDFG comments about potential Project effects on local fish and wildlife resources. IDFG and CCE have begun coordination to assess Project effects (e.g., greater sage-grouse surveys). However, important information gaps still exist (e.g., Project construction, operations, maintenance, water right implementation, etc.). Filling these gaps is therefore necessary to address the following key issues and questions about Project effects on priority local fish and wildlife resources and associated recreation supported by existing conditions:

1. How would the following elements of the proposed Project and water right implementation alter existing environmental conditions for fish and wildlife resources within Anderson Ranch Reservoir, South Fork Boise River downstream of Anderson Ranch Dam, Boise River downstream of Lucky Peak Dam, and surrounding landscapes?
 - a. Hydroelectric reservoir, pump stations and all associated infrastructure construction designs and mapped footprint.
 - b. Hydroelectric reservoir initially fill and future fill operations.
 - c. Daily/seasonal hydroelectric water diversion (e.g. frequencies, timing, durations, and volumes).

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- d. Anderson Ranch Reservoir pumping depth and location; Inflow (from hydroelectric reservoir) depth and location and impacts to water column stratification and mixing.
 - e. Anderson Ranch Reservoir and South Fork Boise River water quantity and availability changes (e.g., losses, gains and non-hydroelectric downstream conveyances).
 - f. Daily/seasonal Anderson Ranch Reservoir stage and South Fork Boise River hydrograph changes.
 - g. Boise River downstream of Lucky Peak Reservoir hydrograph changes due to an additional 80,000 acre-feet of conveyance.
 - h. Delivery and diversion locations of storage water throughout the Treasure Valley.
2. How would the proposed Project and water right implementation alter the following existing fishery resources and recreation in the South Fork Boise River and reservoirs?
- a. Endangered Species Act-protected Bull Trout viability.
 - b. Sportfish populations (e.g. Kokanee, Rainbow Trout and Smallmouth Bass).
 - i. Fish community diversity and species abundance.
 - ii. Fish growth rates.
 - iii. Fish mortality sources (e.g., entrainment/impingement).
 - c. Aquatic habitat availability and suitability.
 - i. Fishery carrying capacity.
 - ii. Forage productivity (e.g., plankton and forage fish diversity, abundance, and distribution).
 - iii. Water quality (e.g., temperature thermocline stratification, oxygen, turbidity, nutrients, etc.).
 - iv. Shoreline erosion and tributary outlet stability.
 - v. Fluvial processes and function.
 - d. Recreational opportunities.
 - i. Angling success (i.e., boating and shoreline anglers).
 - ii. Reservoir boating access, navigation, and shoreline mooring.
3. How would the proposed Project affect the following existing wildlife resources and associated recreation in and surrounding area?
- a. Migratory Birds.
 - b. Sage Grouse.
 - i. Seasonal habitats (e.g., nesting and brood rearing).
 - ii. Lekking.
 - iii. Seasonal migration.
 - c. Big Game (mule deer, elk, and pronghorn).
 - i. Summer and transition habitat availability.
 - ii. Seasonal migration.
 - iii. Hunting opportunity and success.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. IDFG looks forward to continue working with IDWR and CCE during the water appropriation process to address information gaps that currently limit IDFG's ability to assess Project effects on priority fish and wildlife resources. For questions, please contact Tom Bassista, Technical Assistance Program Coordinator (208-287-2773; thomas.bassista@idfg.idaho.gov).

Sincerely,



Craig White
Magic Valley Regional Supervisor

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