



April 11, 2024

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Subject: Harm from striped bass at the Daguerre Point Dam Nature-Like Fishway Project

Dear Mr. Bonham, Ms. Quan, and Mr. Whittlesey:

The undersigned groups are writing to raise concerns specific to the Daguerre Point Dam Nature-Like Fishway Project (Project), as described in the May 12, 2023 “Term Sheet for Framework of Settlement Agreement for Yuba River Watershed Habitat Restoration Plan” (Term Sheet) executed by you on behalf of your agencies.

The Term Sheet refers to a May 13, 2023 Exhibit 1.1, “Lower Yuba River at Daguerre Point Dam Nature-Like Fishway and Water Supply Facilities Preliminary Restoration Plan —

DRAFT” (Draft Plan). The Draft Plan enumerates the design and maintenance problems at Daguerre Point Dam that have persisted for decades. The Draft Plan states, “The purpose of this proposed Restoration Plan is to improve fish passage on the lower Yuba River at Daguerre Point Dam (DPD) while maintaining present water supply and hydraulic mining debris retention functions of the dam and impoundment.”

However, the Draft Plan does not identify potential harm, or any intention to prevent such harm, resulting from the almost-certain migration of striped bass into the existing protected salmonid spawning and rearing refuge upstream of Daguerre Point Dam should the proposed low-gradient “Nature-Like Fishway” (Fishway) be constructed and operated as currently envisioned. The existing configuration of fish ladders at Daguerre Point Dam creates an almost-complete passage barrier for striped bass. This protects the salmonids, so long as they remain upstream of Daguerre Point Dam from being eaten by striped bass.

We understand that the intent of the low-gradient Fishway is to provide volitional passage of green sturgeon, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and Pacific lamprey (a species of concern), while improving migration conditions for ESA-listed salmonids. However, when volitional passage is provided for green sturgeon, striped bass are also likely to migrate above Daguerre Point Dam if the Project does not physically prevent them from doing so. Although striped bass are unlikely to migrate above the Narrows reach, Englebright Dam physically prevents salmonids from establishing a spawning and rearing refuge free of striped bass impacts similar to the existing condition.

In addition to concerns about protecting anadromous salmonids, several of our organizations are gravely concerned about the threat that striped bass would pose to the robust resident *O. mykiss* fishery upstream of Daguerre Point Dam. This fishery is a statewide destination for anglers across California and beyond. Importantly, resident *O. mykiss* are a genetic reservoir of threatened California Central Valley Steelhead trout (*O. mykiss*).

We therefore request that your agencies, in the forthcoming environmental review document(s) for the Project, evaluate physical and operational additions to the Project that would prevent or, at minimum, reduce the migration of striped bass upstream of Daguerre Point Dam.¹ We also recommend site-specific measures to reduce the existing impacts of striped bass on salmonids downstream of Daguerre Point Dam; efforts by East Bay Municipal Utility District downstream of Woodbridge Dam on the Mokelumne River may provide conceptual approaches to collaboration and the consideration of potential risks.²

Thank you for considering the harm posed by the passage of striped bass into the unique salmonid and green sturgeon recovery efforts on the lower Yuba River. As committed to in section 3.1 of the Draft Plan, please also involve ‘other stakeholders’ (the public and non-governmental organizations) in developing the next draft of Exhibit 1.1, “Lower Yuba River at

¹ We look forward to the environmental review of the Project as committed to in Resolution No. 2024-01 adopted by the Yuba County Water Agency Board of Directors on January 2, 2024.

² Sabal, Megan, Sean Hayes, Joseph Merz, and Jose Setka. "Habitat alterations and a nonnative predator, the Striped Bass, increase native Chinook Salmon mortality in the Central Valley, California." *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* 36, no. 2 (2016): 309-320.

Daguerre Point Dam Nature-Like Fishway and Water Supply Facilities Preliminary Restoration Plan,” in order to help address the concerns outlined above.

Respectfully submitted,



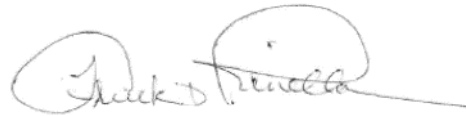
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