Department of Water and Power the City of Los Angeles

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Notice of Preparation

Date: February 17, 2010

To: Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report
Owens River Gorge Restoration Project
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, City of Los Angeles

The City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) is proposing to permanently increase instream water flows to the Owens River Gorge between the LADWP's Upper Gorge Power Plant and Pleasant Valley Reservoir. As the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the LADWP has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared for the proposed Owens River Gorge Restoration Project (proposed project).

Project Location: The proposed project would occur in an approximate 10-mile segment (or reach) within the Owens River Gorge (Gorge) located between Crowley Reservoir in southwest Mono County and Pleasant Valley Reservoir in northwest Inyo County, California (Figure 1). The Long Valley Dam is located at the southern end of Crowley Reservoir, which is approximately 15 miles southeast of the town of Mammoth Lakes, and the incorporated City of Bishop is approximately 8.5 miles southeast of Pleasant Valley Reservoir.

The Gorge traverses the jurisdictional boundary of Inyo National Forest; however the Gorge is under the ownership and jurisdictional authority of the City of Los Angeles (LADWP) for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining hydroelectric power plants in the Gorge. There are three 37.5 megawatt (MW) hydroelectric power plants within this reach of the Gorge that are operated by LADWP. The power plants are known as the Upper Gorge Power Plant, Middle Gorge Power Plant, and Control Gorge Power Plant, and are located, from north to south, at Gorge miles 9, 12 and 19, respectively.

111 North Hope Street, Los Angeles, California 90012-2607 *Mailing address:* Box 51111, Los Angeles 90051-5700
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Project Description: The proposed project would involve the approval of a "Draft Stipulation for Entry of Final Judgment and Permanent Injunction: Order of Final Judgment and Permanent Injunction," hereinafter referred to as the *Proposed Stipulated Judgment*. The purpose of the Proposed Project is to implement the Proposed Stipulated Judgment and thereby comply with Fish and Game Code Section 5937, which requires dam owners and operators to allow sufficient water to pass at all times through a dam "to keep in good condition any fish that may be planted or exist below the dam." The Proposed Project includes the restoration of water flows in an approximate 10 mile segment, or reach, of the Owens River Gorge (Gorge), located in Inyo and Mono Counties, California. The Proposed Project reach is located south of Crowley Reservoir and Long Valley Dam, between the Gorge's Upper Gorge Power Plant (UGPP) and Pleasant Valley Reservoir. The primary objective of the Proposed Project is to comply with Fish and Game Code Section 5937 to the satisfaction of the Department of Fish and Game and to settle outstanding litigation on the matter. The Proposed Project is intended to provide for keeping fish in good condition within the project reach and to satisfy Fish and Game Code Section 5946, without unreasonably interfering with, or disrupting, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's operation of facilities within the Gorge to respond to annual and seasonal water supply demands and hydroelectric power generation needs.

The proposed flow restoration schedule includes specified *base flows* and *pulse flows*. Annual base flows would cycle through a ten year period with water releases ranging between 35 and 85 cubic feet per second (cfs), depending on month, cycle year, and power plant operational needs. Pulse flows would be released according to a 20 year cycle that would include two types of pulse flows, *channel maintenance* pulse flows, and *riparian recruitment* pulse flows. Channel maintenance pulse flows would occur in 13 years of every 20 year period; they would occur between March 1st and September 30th, have a total duration of 7 days, and a maximum release rate of 400 cfs in the section between UGPP and Middle Gorge Power Plant (MGPP), and a maximum release rate of 650 to 680 cfs in the section between MGPP and Control Gorge Power Plant (CGPP). Riparian recruitment pulse flows would occur in five years of every 20 year period; they would occur in late May or early June, and have a total duration of 27 days with a maximum release rate of 400 cfs in the section between UGPP and MGPP, and a maximum release rate of 650 to 680 cfs in the section between MGPP and CGPP. In the remaining two years of each 20 year cycle no pulse flows would occur. Channel maintenance and riparian recruitment pulse flows would release approximately 5,600 and 13,000 AF of water per year, respectively.

In addition to increasing instream water flows, a fishway would be installed and maintained at an existing concrete fish barrier located north of the Control Gorge Power Plant to bring the existing fish barrier into compliance with Fish and Game Code section 5901. The fishway would be made of welded aluminum and fabricated off-site. It would be bolted to the downstream face of the fish barrier. A slot may be sawn through the crest of the dam to reduce its effective height from10 feet to approximately 6 feet. Retention of the fish barrier dam would maintain the existing stream bed gradient control and prevent potential down-cutting of the stream bottom that might otherwise be triggered by removal of the structure. The fishway would be adequate to pass adult brown trout during base flow conditions.

Implementation of the Proposed Project would be accomplished through the use of existing water conveyance facilities and structures located within the Gorge. No new facilities would be constructed, although reinforcement of some existing structures within the Gorge would be necessary to accommodate peak pulse flows (protection of the tailbay release structure approximately 200 feet downstream of the UGPP; removal of the rock formation from the stream channel upstream of the stream-side transmission tower; realignment, stabilization, and reinforcement of the base of the stream-side transmission tower, and/or widening of the stream channel downstream; widening the stream channel and stabilization of the east and west banks at the waterfall above MGPP; repair of approximately 100 lineal feet of stream bank revetment along the west bank directly upstream of the MGPP; removal and replacement of the existing double bypass pipes and trash rack at the MGPP Tailbay Bypass structure; raising the elevation and reinforcing the west bank along the access road approximately 2,350 feet downstream of the MGPP; breaking-up and removing the rock outcrop from east and west bank and boulders in the channel to alleviate the constriction in the stream channel approximately 1,300 feet upstream of the MGPP).

The LADWP has proposed several resource protection measures that would be implemented during the proposed project's retrofitting and fishway installment activities. These measures include: 1) avoidance of cultural resources, sensitive plants, and other sensitive resources; and 2) development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) or other measures to control soil erosion and sedimentation, reduce air emissions and noise due to equipment operations, and the safe handling of hazardous materials.

Probable Environmental Effects: The LADWP has prepared an Initial Study of the proposed project and has determined that impacts to Biological Resources may be potentially significant as a result of the proposed project. The remaining environmental issues have been determined to have no impact, less-than-significant impact, or less-than-significant impacts with mitigation incorporated. Therefore, the LADWP will prepare an EIR that evaluates in more detail the impacts associated with the project. The EIR will also include analysis of the "No Project" alternative.

Public Review Period: The enclosed Initial Study is being made available for public review for a period of 30 days beginning February 25, 2010 and concluding March 26, 2010. The document may be viewed at the following website address: http://www.ladwp.com/envnotices. Copies are also available for review at Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Bishop Office (300 Mandich Street, Bishop, CA 93514), and the Bishop Library (210 Academy Avenue, Bishop, California 93514). **Comments on the Initial Study must be received in writing no later than 5:00 p.m., March 29, 2010** and sent to: Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Environmental Services, Attn: Laura Hunter, 111 N. Hope Street – Room 1050, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Comments may also be faxed to Ms. Hunter at (213) 367-4096.

If you require additional information, please contact Laura Hunter at (213) 367-4096.

Sincerely,

Charles C. Holloway

Charles Holloway
Manager of Environmental Planning and Assessment
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power