



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 18-494, **Version:** 2

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** Supervisor Estelle Fennell

**SUBJECT:**

Resolution Adopting the County of Humboldt's Position Regarding the Future of the Potter Valley Project on the Eel River

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors adopt the attached resolution stating the County of Humboldt's position regarding the future of the Potter Valley Project.

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

N/A

**DISCUSSION:**

On May 15, 2018, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion for Supervisors Estelle Fennell and Rex Bohn, the County's representative and alternate to the Eel-Russian River Commission ("ERRC"), to create a policy on the County's position regarding the future of the Potter Valley Project and bring it back to the Board before the ERRC meeting on June 8, 2018, in Ukiah.

The ERRC is a joint powers authority with directors from Humboldt County, Mendocino County, Lake County, and Sonoma County. The ERRC was established in 1978 to support regional coordination on watershed conservation, flood control, and economic stimulus and development within the two watersheds. The Potter Valley Project has been a primary focus of discussion for the ERRC since its creation.

The Potter Valley Project is a hydropower facility, owned by Pacific Gas & Electric ("PG&E") and located in Mendocino County that diverts water from the Eel River into the Russian River (Attachment 1). Impacts from the Potter Valley Project on Eel River fisheries, water supply, water quality, and recreation have been a longstanding concern.

PG&E's license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC") expires in 2022. In 2017, PG&E initiated actions to renew the FERC license. Also in 2017, Congressman Jared Huffman convened an ad hoc committee to address the issues and concerns in the Eel River and Russian River watersheds with the goal of identifying a "two-basin solution" that could be advanced in the re-licensing process.

In May 2018, PG&E announced its intent to put the Potter Valley Project up for auction. The concept of a regional entity, such as ERRC, assuming ownership and becoming the licensee for the facility has been suggested. This concept will likely be explored over the next several months.

The attached resolution (Attachment 2) was developed based on the goals, policies, and implementation

measures contained in the Water Resources Element of the General Plan, and with input from the Fish & Game Advisory Commission, which advises the Board on fish and game matters (Attachment 3). Supervisor Fennell consulted with the Wiyot Tribe and City of Fortuna on an initial draft of the resolution.

Public Works has retained Craig Tucker, a consultant with considerable experience working on the Klamath River dams, to assist the County with discussions and negotiations regarding the Potter Valley Project. An initial briefing memo is contained in Attachment 4.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

N/A

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

N/A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 Eel River Watershed Map

Attachment 2 Resolution Adopting the County of Humboldt's Position Regarding the Future of the Potter Valley Project on the Eel River

Attachment 3 Letter (April 2018) from the Humboldt County Fish & Game Advisory Commission

Attachment 4 Briefing memo (May 31, 2018)

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: H-4

Meeting of: May 15, 2018