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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Auburn - The Placer County Water Agency is gearing up for a lengthy process to successfully renew the federal license it holds for the Middle Fork American River hydroelectric project.

At Thursday's (Apr. 3) meeting of the PCWA Board of Directors, board and staff members discussed the agency's preliminary plans and how it and the County of Placer will work collaboratively on the relicensing.

The Middle Fork Project includes five power plants, seven dams, four reservoirs and a water storage capacity of 342,000 acre-feet with a 120,000 acre feet of that being water rights to PCWA. In the average year, the project generates 1 billion kilowatt-hours of clean hydroelectric energy.

The hydroelectric project is owned and operated by PCWA under a 50-year license granted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Both the license and a separate power purchase contract to sell the project's electricity to PG&E expire in 2013.

PCWA General Manager David Breninger noted that the agency views the relicensing as an opportunity to create new conditions under which the extensive water and power system can be operated after 2013 to further enhance its benefits for the people of Placer County.

PCWA District 2 Director Alex Ferreira, and a former 24-year Placer County Supervisor, said the project's water resources are immense and that county and agency leaders are united in their desire to create local benefits through the relicensing.

The PCWA Board and Placer County Board of Supervisors, since 1975, established that the two entities would work together to accomplish the relicensing.

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This week, PCWA Director of Strategic Affairs Einar Maisch outlined a preliminary plan under which a small core group of staff and a number of consultants would be hired to accomplish the multi-year relicensing process.

The first major task, Maisch said, would be to assemble, categorize and computerize more than 40 years worth of project records beginning with the initial FERC licensing process in the early 1960s.

Agency and county staff members have been working on a draft Memorandum of Understanding for their cooperation on the upcoming relicensing process, he added.

A briefing on the process will be made by staff on May 13 before the County Board of Supervisors and May 15 for the PCWA Board of Directors.

In other business, PCWA directors:

- declared that up to 16,500 acre-feet of surplus water would be available this year from neighboring water agencies to supply irrigation water for commercial agricultural customers in Zone 5 west of Lincoln.

- voted in support of a one-year trial program under which large irrigation water users would receive financial incentives for water conservation efforts, without facing reductions in their overall commitments of water. This is another phase in the agency's every expanding water use efficiency program for best management practices of agency water supplies.

- voted to increase the agency's participation in the Northern California Power Agency through status as a Generating Associate Member at an annual cost of \$26,608. PCWA has been associated with NCPA for several years. As the agency gears up for relicensing, this increased level of membership will afford PCWA added opportunities for advice and consulting from NCPA and other public power agencies plus additional federal regulatory representation.

- held a workshop on the agency's organizational structure. Board and staff want to assure continued effectiveness and organizational knowledge as the agency's work force changes and expands its scope of service across Placer County.

The next regular meeting of the PCWA Board of Directors will be held at 3 p.m. on Apr. 17 in the Placer County Board of Supervisors chambers, 175 Fulweiler Avenue in Auburn. PCWA board meetings are open to the public.