

Bear River Canal Break

Early on the morning of Tuesday, April 19, 2011, in a remote canyon near Colfax, a slide occurred below a portion of PG&E's Bear River Canal causing part of the canal sidewall to break and divert water from the canal down the steep hill into the Bear River.

PG&E is investigating the cause of the slide. The canal system was inspected by foot patrol on April 1. No potential issues were identified at that time. It is not known at this time, if recent heavy rains or another cause may have contributed to the slide.

At the time of the slide, the canal was carrying about 400 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water and it is able to carry as much as 450 cfs. Immediately after the slide, water level alarms along the canal identified a change in water flows downstream of the break, notifying PG&E hydro operators who immediately began to stop the flow of water in the Bear River Canal. PG&E is assessing the best plan on how it can begin making repairs in this remote and rugged area. PG&E biologist will help identify if any ecological impacts may have occurred.

The canal system delivers water from just below Rollins Lake in Nevada County to Folsom Lake, and along the way the water generates hydroelectric power. At numerous locations along the canal, it delivers water to Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) and Nevada Irrigation District (NID). PG&E is working closely with PCWA and NID to keep them apprised of events.

While there are other canal systems that PCWA and NID can utilize to receive some of the usual water deliveries made by the Bear River Canal, not all anticipated water can be delivered while the canal is under repair. PCWA and NID are developing plans to serve their customers during this time, and PG&E is working with them.

Before PG&E can begin to make repairs, it will need to engineer the repair work and get permit approvals from state and federal agencies. PG&E is expediting this process so as to resume water deliveries as soon as possible.