

Shoreline Management Plans

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The Sierra Foothills region is home to many dams that provide hydroelectric power. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regulates non-federal dams through the Federal Power Act of 1935. Over the next ten years, licenses from FERC will expire for 69 of these dams scattered throughout Tuolumne, Yuba, Nevada, Merced, Mariposa, Placer, Shasta, Tehama, Mono, Butte, Fresno, and El Dorado Counties. As part of the re-licensing process, FERC often requires applicants (licensees) to prepare a Shoreline Management Plan to manage the narrow strip of land along the reservoir (i.e., within the “project boundary”).

The shoreline sometimes includes sandy beaches, riparian or marsh areas, boat docks, and other reservoir related features. As the desire for lakefront homes and recreational access increases in the Sierra Nevada, these Shoreline Management Plans have become more essential. Most, if not all, projects will experience conflicting demands on how to manage project shorelines.

Shoreline Management Plans are typically developed with input from stakeholders. Once the Shoreline Management Plan is filed with FERC, there is typically a public comment period (although not always). During the review and comment period, interested parties are given the opportunity to submit comments for FERC to consider. The next

step commonly involves preparation of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. In most cases, FERC's staff will prepare an environmental assessment for the proposed Plan.

FERC will approve the plan if it determines that the plan is consistent with the requirements of the project license and adequately addresses issues raised during the proceeding. Ideally, a Shoreline Management Plan recognizes all federal, state and local planning policies and zoning that apply to the shoreline and adjacent areas.

Additional information about FERC can be found at the following website: www.FERC.gov. More detailed information on Shoreline Management Plans can be found at the following website: <http://www.ferc.gov/industries/hydropower/enviro/smpbook.pdf>

If you have news about planning in the Sierra Foothills region, please send me an e-mail or give me a call. We'd especially like to hear from local government agencies regarding professional accomplishments, organizational changes, and project-related news.

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