

September 4, 2009

Senate Pro Tem Darrel Steinberg
California State Senate

Speaker Karen Bass
California State Assembly

Senator Joe Simitian
California State Senate

Assembly member Felipe Fuentes
California State Assembly

Senator Alex Padilla
California State Senate

Assembly member Nancy Skinner
California State Assembly

RE: DON'T OPEN FLOOD GATES TO BC HYDRO WITH SB 14

Dear Honorable Sirs/Madams:

As leading members of California's and British Columbia's environmental community, we strongly urge you to not allow any amendments to SB 14 that would study hydroelectric power coming from British Columbia, change the current definition of renewable energy or open the door to this or any other non-renewable energy technology in California's Renewable Portfolio Standard.

BC HYDRO

The hydroelectric power plants in BC of interest to PG&E are not environmentally benign and they should not be considered renewable energy. Consider this:

- PG&E's own study concluded that BC hydro would not qualify as renewable under California's current definition, thoroughly debated in policy committees and written to best protect what's left of our flowing rivers and streams.^[1]
- The BC Utilities Commission recently rejected BC Hydro's Long-Term Acquisition Plan because it concluded that the power was not needed by BC. Thus the main driver for developing hydro projects in BC--there are over 600 applications for hydro projects in BC--will be the export market and primarily California.
- As currently proposed, a study would assess British Columbia's environmental review processes. This is inappropriate because it ignores the current requirement that all out-of-state energy must meet California's regulations and instead makes British Columbia's review processes the determining factor as to whether British Columbia hydropower is RPS eligible.

Hydroelectric power, especially what is being proposed by PG&E up in British Columbia, is the antithesis of what SB 14 is all about. Hydroelectric power has very limited potential to meet California's future energy needs and can be one of the most environmentally destructive things humans can do to this planet.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY'S BOTTOMLINE

The environmental community has been very clear from the start that there are three issues we can't compromise on: 1) the 33% by 2020 mandate itself, 2) the definition of renewable energy, and 3)

^[1] PG&E. 6/20/08 report to the CPUC about BC hydro concludes: "BC run-of-river hydro facilities would not be qualified as RPS eligible" in CA. "The key obstacle to project success (i.e. importing BC hydro) that must be modified by legislation is the definition of new small hydro generation."

loopholes or off-ramps to nowhere. SB 14 so far has been devoid of these poison pills for the environmental community and we ask that it remain so.

To be clear, certain organizations signed below have expressed a willingness to at least not oppose, if not support, a study by the CEC on newly developed renewable energy technologies. The purpose of such a study would be to carefully study technologies that have yet to be considered an energy resource, not to mention a renewable energy resource. The purpose of such a study would be to make sure California remains an incubator of forward-thinking ingenuity within the renewable energy industry.

Needless-to-say, a study by the CEC on BC hydro is simply not in concert with this vision of future renewable energy technologies. Hydro electric power, like garbage incineration, is a technology that has already been vetted within the legislative process and there is already strong language establishing strict environmental parameters limiting its use. A study at the CEC on either of these technologies is clearly an attempt at an end run around existing statute.

The bottom line is California should dam up Canada for the benefit of PG&E or any other utility. We should not export our environmental impacts to Canada. Doing so under the guise of promoting renewable energy is even more egregious.

California is the nation's leader in environmental protection and promoting truly clean renewable energy. SB 14 has the potential to be a game changer when it comes to driving a mainstream market for the most promising technologies such as wind, solar and geothermal power.

Please don't allow PG&E or any other utility to water down California's powerful renewable energy mandate.

Thank you.

Pete Price
California League of Conservation Voters

V. John White
Clean Power Campaign

Bernadette Del Chiaro
Environment California

Kim Delfino
Defenders of Wildlife

Jim Metropulos
Sierra Club California

Matt Vander Sluis
Planning and Conservation League

Keith Nakatani
California Hydropower Reform Coalition

Adam Browning
Vote Solar

Gwen Barlee
Western Canada Wilderness Committee

Steve Evans
Friends of the River

Jan Dettmer
British Columbia Creeks Protection Society

Dave Steindorf
American Whitewater

Steve Rothert
American Rivers

Richard Roos-Collins
Natural Heritage Institute

Brian Johnson
Trout Unlimited

Jason Rainey
South Yuba River Citizens League

Curtis Knight
California Trout

Pete Bell
Foothills Conservancy

Chris Shutes
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Nate Rangel
California Outdoors

Cc: Kip Lipper, Kristin Stauffacher, Gabriele Zeps, Arnie Sowell, Kellie Smith, Ed Randolph, John Moffatt, members of the Natural Resources Committees, members of the Energy Committees