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**ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION URGES CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR TO PROTECT CALIFORNIA'S RIVERS
FROM FEDERAL HYDROELECTRIC DAM RELICENSING**

May 13, 2020 (Sacramento, CA) – Following the California Legislature's return last week after a six-week suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic, California environmental groups urge Governor Newsom to prioritize protecting California's rivers, streams, and wildlife from the present and ongoing threat of federal waivers of California's authority to issue water quality certifications for hydroelectric dams.

Over a hundred federally managed dams need new licenses to operate in California. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has near-exclusive authority to license federal and most non-federal hydropower projects connected to the interstate electric grid. These dams, however, greatly impact California's rivers, and water quality certifications issued under section 401 of the Clean Water Act are one of the only times a state may ensure protections for water quality during the licensing or relicensing of a hydroelectric dam.

Over the past three weeks, Trump's FERC has relied on the controversial D.C. Circuit Court ruling in *Hoopla Valley Tribe v. FERC* to issue two orders waiving state water quality certifications: one waiver in North Carolina and, critically, one waiver in California for the Yuba-Bear Project located on the Middle Yuba, South Yuba, and Bear Rivers. Without water quality certifications, these dams would operate exclusively to generate power and electricity and without any regard for water quality measures like flow or temperature, which are critical to support California's rivers and wildlife.

"The threat of waiving California's authority to oversee and impose water quality protections for these dams is no longer theoretical – it is real and happening now," writes the coalition. "California cannot afford to wait to impose a solution, otherwise California risks the devastating impact of having hydroelectric dams operate unchecked and without adequate water quality protections for the next 40 to 50 years."

"Second only to climate change, waiving state water quality certifications is one of the most pressing threats to California's rivers," said Sean Bothwell, Executive Director of California Coastkeeper Alliance. "We need Governor Newsom to ask the Legislature to introduce emergency legislation to resolve this crisis – not next year, but now to protect the waters we drink, swim, and fish."

"This is a threat we're facing in our watershed now," said Melinda Booth, Executive Director of the South Yuba River Citizens League. "This is a dangerous and precedential move to usurp California's authority in protecting our rivers and native fish, and will unravel decades of investment and work to restore California's river ecosystems."

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ABOUT CALIFORNIA COASTKEEPER ALLIANCE - California Coastkeeper Alliance is a statewide voice for our waters. With the federal administration working against our environmental laws, CCKA defends and

expands California's protective legislation and strengthens the function of our state water board. We represent local Waterkeepers, empower communities towards a #TrashFree2030, and advocate with companies through the Blue Business Council. Together, we fight for swimmable, fishable, and drinkable waters for Californians today – and for future generations. California Coastkeeper Alliance is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. For more information, visit cacoastkeeper.org and follow us on Twitter [@CA_Waterkeepers](https://twitter.com/CA_Waterkeepers).

ABOUT SOUTH YUBA RIVER CITIZENS LEAGUE - Based in Nevada City, CA, the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL, pronounced "circle"), is the leading voice for the protection and restoration of the Yuba River watershed. Founded in 1983 through a rural, grassroots campaign to defend the South Yuba River from proposed hydropower dams, SYRCL has developed into a vibrant community organization with more than 3,500 members and volunteers. SYRCL is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, also known as Yuba River Waterkeeper, and a proud member of the California Coastkeeper Alliance. For more information, visit yubariver.org and follow us on Twitter [@yubariverpeople](https://twitter.com/yubariverpeople).