November 17, 2013

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California Energy Commission
Dockets Office, MS-4
Re: Docket No. 11-RPS-01
docket@energy.ca.gov
cc: Brian McCollough, Project Manager
Brian.McCollough@energy.ca.gov.

Subject: Docket number 11-RPS-01: BC Hydro Draft Report

To The California Energy Commission,

I just heard about the opportunity to comment on the BC Hydro Draft Report today (Nov 17th) and although I have missed the Nov 15th deadline, I hope that my comments will still be considered.

I grew up river rafting the rivers of California and Nevada. This expereince gave me a deep emotional connection to river corridors that has impacted my life deeply. I am now a sponsored whitewater kayaker for Fluid kayaks and travel extensively around the world documenting and enjoying them (www.leifandnatalie.blogspot.com). My love and interest in rivers has taken me to pursue studying rivers as a career. I am currently a PhD student in Fluvial Geomorphology (the study of rivers) at Colorado State University working in the Mackenzie River Basin of Northern Canada.

As a scientist I have studied the impacts of dams on river corridors and have come to the conclusion that large dams are not sustainable. I recently wrote an article for the National Geographic Water Currents Blog as a guest fully detailing my thoughts on this subject (Anderson, 2013: Not so clean hydropower is damming us all). Within the article I speak on how large dams are societal hazards, pollutants, non-renewable and economically unsound. I encourage you to read it.

A river carries many things besides water. A dam cannot be “run of the river” because it serves as an impoundment by which, not just water, but sediment, nutrients, and organisms cannot pass. This blockage of the natural flux of materials up and downriver has devastating environmental and societal effects; effectively contributing to species loss, decimating fisheries, and starving floodplain lands of much needed nutrients and water. Once you add in the cost of mitigating effects of the dam such as food scarcity, flooding, pollution, relocation, ecosystem rehabilitation, countering risks of natural disaster, and cleaning up disasters that do occur (paid for in suffering by those affected and monetarily by the taxpayers) the cost-benefit for the average citizen just doesn’t pan out

Thus, I agree with the staff conclusion that they do “not find any compelling reason to modify the existing eligibility requirements of the Renewables Portfolio Standard statute” in California to incentivize importing run-of-river hydropower from British Columbia.

In addition I request that the staff correct the finding that hydropower from British Columbia is “potentially eligible” because hydro facilities greater than 30 MW or built after 2005 are currently ineligible as “renewable” under the California Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and California statute states that "to be considered eligible for California's Renewables Portfolio Standard, projects located outside the United States must be developed and operated in a manner that is as protective of the environment as a similar facility located in California." California laws are much more protective of the environment than those in British Columbia.

As a citizen I am very concerned over the rash building of large hydro-electric projects in developing countries as well as Canada in the name of ‘clean energy’. In addition, long transmission lines just may not be worth it. I encourage California to invest in working out sustainable energy solutions through decentralization and localization. California has great potential to harvest their own hydropower from wave action along its coastlines and from in-stream turbines along some of its own rivers.

If you clogged most of your arteries in your body, you would no longer be able to live. Likewise, if we keep clogging the rivers of the Earth, don’t be so sure that this planet will be able to support life as we know it. The current spurt of damming of large rivers in the name of obtaining renewable clean energy is a global crisis. California has been a leader in environment in the past and I am proud to be from California. I hope that California will be a leader in this issue as well.

Sincerely,

Natalie Anderson

Team Fluid Kayaker
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