



DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY NOTES*

LEE VINING, FERC PROJECT NO. 1388

PME-1 MINIMUM FLOWS TWG MEETING

MARCH 12, 2026 9:00 – 10:00 AM

**These meeting notes are documentation of general discussions from the meeting held on the above-noted date and focus on stakeholder questions and comments. These notes are not a verbatim account of proceedings and do not represent any final decisions or official documentation for the project or participating agencies.*

1.0 AGENDA

- Address PME-1 questions received from USFS and State Water Board
- Describe operational conditions
- Identify priorities for water levels (e.g., recreation level of Ellery)
- Describe inflow calculations

2.0 ATTENDEES

Relicensing Team Members

Matthew Woodhall, SCE

Seth Carr, SCE

Shannon Luoma, Kleinschmidt

Carissa Shoemaker, Kleinschmidt

Bret Hoffman, Kleinschmidt

Technical Working Group Members & Interested Parties

Tristan Leong, US Forest Service (USFS)

Sheila Irons, USFS

Michael Wiese, USFS

Stephanie Heller, USFS

Bryan Muro, State Water Board

Adam Cohen, State Water Board

Graham Meese, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

Beth Lawson, CDFW

Greg Reis, Mono Lake Committee (MLC)

Robbie Di Paolo, MLC

3.0 PME-1 DISCUSSION: FLOWS BELOW ELLERY LAKE/POOLE POWERHOUSE

1. Clarifying PME-1 Minimum Flow Requirements Below Ellery Lake / Poole Powerhouse

- Stakeholders discussed challenges with the current flow-related license conditions—particularly the “89 cfs / 27 cfs or natural flow” language, which is difficult to interpret, implement, and enforce.
- USFS concerns: Current language doesn’t translate into enforceable 4(e) conditions. Need clearer, operationally accurate terms.
- Operational realities (SCE):
 - Ellery Lake is managed within a 2-ft recreation band, which strongly influences outflow.
 - Minimum operational outflow is generally 10–11 cfs to keep the generator idling (“P min”).
 - Natural inflows aren’t directly measured at Saddlebag/Tioga.
 - Adjustments to operations during winter are difficult as the valves at upper reservoirs are inaccessible.
- Stakeholder concerns:
 - Need clarity on whether minimum flows are instantaneous or daily average.
 - Large flow swings (e.g., 80 to 5 cfs) create ecological concerns.
 - The existing “or natural flow” condition may no longer be appropriate.
- Potential directions for new flow requirements:
 - Replace “or natural flow” with a flow metric tied to sums of known upstream releases.
 - Establish a minimum flow floor (likely around 10 cfs, with dry-year exceptions).
 - Use daily averages for compliance but add an instantaneous requirement (e.g., 90% of the daily target, measured at 15-min intervals—language suggested by USFS).
 - Evaluate feasibility of instantaneous compliance given operational limits and CAISO scheduling.

2. Defining Inflow Accounting and “Natural Flow”

- Without gages on all tributaries, “natural inflow” is currently inferred from maintaining Ellery Lake level, not from measured upstream values.
- Stakeholders noted additional inflows (e.g., Slate Creek) complicate the system.
- SCE explained that forecasts via the VISTA model guide daily operations and coordination with CAISO.
- There is broad agreement that the term “natural flow” is misleading and should be replaced with clearer flow-balancing language.

3. Managing the 2-Foot Recreation Band at Ellery Lake

- SCE strongly prefers keeping Ellery near the top of the band to avoid:
 - Long recovery times,
 - Equipment damage from icing,
 - Operational instability.
- Flows are typically regulated to avoid spilling, though spill does occur during snowmelt.

4. Relationship Between Proposed PME-1 Flow Adjustments and Observed Conditions

- Earlier adaptations in the licensing process increased flows below Poole during spring/summer.
- Winter low-flow conditions remain an issue; past variances were needed.
- Some stakeholders noted that proposed changes may better reflect actual operations rather than substantially change flow quantities.

4.0 PME-1 DISCUSSION: TIOGA LAKE ELEVATIONS

- Current PME-1 Table 2 language (“every effort will be made”) is too vague.
- Agencies asked for specificity around what SCE can and cannot control.
- Suggestions included:
 - Defining allowable ranges above minimum flows (e.g., 10–20%).
 - Identifying operational constraints affecting elevation targets in dry years.

5.0 SCHEDULE AND ACTION ITEMS

Relicensing Team

- Send draft meeting notes and action items to TWG members.
- Send a poll to schedule a follow-up meeting in late March or early April.
- Review feasibility and implications of implementing instantaneous (15-min) minimum flow requirements alongside daily averages.
- Evaluate and propose clearer language for:
 - Minimum flow floors (e.g., operational 10 cfs floor),
 - Percentage-based flow requirements tied to upstream releases,
 - Tioga Lake elevation management (“every effort”)—what is within/ outside SCE control.
- Prepare a spreadsheet comparison as requested by MLC:
 - Unimpaired flow approach,
 - PME-1 table approach,
 - Inflow-based approach.

Stakeholders

- Submit proposed language revisions, comments, or requests prior to the next meeting.
- Provide input on flow terminology replacements for “natural flow.”
- Continue drafting potential flow compliance language based on examples from other projects.
- Work with SCE to clarify enforceable terms for 4(e) conditions.