

97 FERC ¶ 62,036
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

East Bay Municipal Utility District

Project No. 2916-047

ORDER AMENDING RECREATION PLAN

(Issued October 16, 2001)

East Bay Municipal Utility District (licensee) filed a letter on May 25, 2001, informing the Commission of its plan to reconfigure some South Shore Recreation Area Campgrounds. The proposed changes are expected to better serve the camping public by offering more space per campsite, modern restrooms, group campsites, and facilities for equestrians. The project is located on the Mokelumne River in Amador, Calaveras, and San Joaquin Counties, California.

BACKGROUND

The project is a multi-purpose system of surface reservoirs and aqueducts operated for water supply, flood control, hydropower production, and recreation. Recreation facilities at the project are located on Camanche Lake and Pardee Lake. Camanche Lake has two main recreation areas: North Shore Recreation Area and South Shore Recreation Area. The North Shore Recreation Area has individual tenting sites, group campsites, a marina and boat ramps, tennis courts, and rental cottages. The South Shore Recreation Area originally had individual tenting campgrounds, RV campsites for short-term and seasonal use, picnic grounds, boat ramps, a swimming beach, a marina, and tennis courts. The Pardee Recreation Area has individual tenting campsites, RV campsites, picnic facilities, a marina and boat ramp, and swimming pools.¹

In 1999, after consultations with various agencies and the Commission, the licensee proposed changing the type of use at Cottonwood Campground (a.k.a. Area C) at the Camanche South Shore Recreation Area from short-term RV camping to tent camping. In a letter dated September 24, 1999, Commission staff agreed that the change was in the best interest of the public. Subsequently, the licensee changed Cottonwood Campground to tent use. The licensee's experience with tent camping has been disappointing with dissatisfied campers complaining about crowded conditions and noise

¹79 FERC 62,073 (1997)

during high-use weekends. In response to these public concerns, the district now plans to reconfigure Cottonwood Campground to provide greater distances between tent sites. While the reconfiguration will reduce the number of campsites in Cottonwood Campground, the licensee plans to add new campsites in other portions of the Camanche Recreation Area.

THE AMENDMENT

The original Cottonwood Campground RV sites were spaced approximately 30 feet apart. Only 82 campsites were ever used in Cottonwood Campground for tent camping because 4 sites were converted to water service areas and 4 sites were considered unusable when converted to tent camping in 1999. According to established recreation guidelines, wider spacing between campsites is more appropriate. Modern campsites will also be added in this campground, and the new restrooms will displace some campsite area. The licensee plans to reconfigure Cottonwood Campground to 45 single campsites, and five double-occupancy group campsites, for a total of 55 campsites. To compensate for reducing campsites in the Cottonwood Campground, the licensee intends to make the following additional campsite improvements.

The licensee plans to add a new equestrian campground adjacent to the Coast to Crest Trail. This new trail opened for use in 1992 and was expanded in 1998. The trail passes along the southern boundary of the Camanche South Shore Recreation Area, and has attracted individual and group equestrians. Many of these equestrians have inquired about the possibility of creating designated equestrian campsites at the recreation area, including a suitable area for their horses. To accommodate these requests, the district plans to add 15 new campsites in a new equestrian campground.

In addition, a 4-unit group campsite in Lakeview Campground has been expanded to a 7-unit site. Finally, the district plans to add five new single campsites in the existing Developed Overflow Campground. As the Cottonwood Campground receives its maximum use only during holiday weekends, the reduced number of campsites will not adversely affect the campsite availability over most of the camping season.

CONSULTATION AND PUBLIC NOTICE

The licensee requested comments from interested state and federal agencies. Records of telephone conversations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) were included in the application. USFWS staff stated that they saw no "red flags" regarding wildlife or listed species. CDFG staff indicated that they

did not have a problem with the described changes and the project sounds reasonable since it is improving the campground for visitor use. However, they reserved final approval until viewing a written description and plans of the project. CDPR staff commented that the Camanche facilities are so far removed from state recreation facilities that there will be no impact to the state facilities. Also, CDPR staff said that the proposal makes sense because their experience in managing camping at similar reservoirs has shown that overly dense campsite locations lead to frequent problems and complaints.

The proposed changes to the Camanche South Recreation area were public noticed with August 24, 2001 as the last day to file comments, motions to intervene, or protests. On August 24, 2001 the Mokelumne River Water and Power Authority (Mokelumne) filed a motion to intervene. In its motion to intervene, Mokelumne states, in part, that it holds a Preliminary Permit for the Middle Bar Project, Project No. 11619, a yet-to-be-developed project to be located on the Mokelumne River². The motion to intervene did not specifically comment on the proposed changes to the recreation facilities at the Camanche South Recreation area.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Commission staff agrees with the licensee that the proposed amendment to the recreation plan will better serve campground visitors because it brings the density of Cottonwood Campground more in line with the densities of other campgrounds at the Camanche South Shore and Camanche North Shore Areas, provides several new campsites, and initiates camping for equestrians. The proposed development plan will offer the public a better overall camping experience. Within 6 months after completing the changes to the facilities, the licensee shall file as-built drawings of the reconfigured and new facilities including the location and text of all signage with the Commission, for approval.

The proposed reconfiguration of some Camanche South Shore Recreation Area campgrounds will promote positive recreation experiences at the project and should be approved.

The Director orders:

²89 FERC 61,001 (1999)

(A) The licensee's request, filed May 25, 2001, to permit the reconfiguration of some Camanche South Shore Recreation Area campgrounds is approved.

(B) The licensee shall file as-built drawings within 6 months of completion of the project. The as-built drawings shall include a map of the facility showing the facilities and access areas in relation to project features and boundary. The location and text of all signage should be included on the drawings.

(C) This order constitutes final agency action. Requests for rehearing by the Commission may be filed within 30 days of the date of issuance of this order, pursuant to 18 C.F.R. § 385.713.

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Division of Hydropower Administration
and Compliance