

Icing At USGS Reference Gages

What should I do if the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) reference gage is reporting “Flow at Station affected by Ice” or “Flow not available” with all reported hourly data being omitted?

Many docket approvals include a special condition that limits withdrawals under certain circumstances, such as requiring that a project sponsor cease all withdrawals from the approved source when stream flow is less than the applicable flow protection threshold(s) specified in the docket.

An off-site USGS stream gage is typically utilized to determine the monitoring threshold for flow protection. If the USGS stream gage has gone offline and is reporting “Ice” or “Not Available”, the project sponsor must suspend all withdrawals unless written approval has been provided by Commission staff. A project sponsor may contact the Commission for special instructions about utilizing the source while the real-time data are unavailable. Please email SRBC’s Compliance Program (either Steve McFeaters at samcfeaters@srbc.net or Jeremy Hoffman at jmhoffman@srbc.net) during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, to discuss the situation. Commission staff will review the most recent gage height and stream discharge rate, historical trend lines at similar flows, and other relevant information such as data from nearby USGS gages to evaluate local flow conditions and determine whether or not withdrawals may resume during that day.

Any project sponsor who makes a withdrawal while the USGS stream gage data from the designated reference gage are not available without written approval to do so from the Commission, would be considered to be operating in noncompliance.

Note that if the USGS gage remains offline for a period of time, the project sponsor must contact the Commission each day (or as otherwise specified by Commission staff) so that staff can reassess the stream flow in accordance with the passby condition. Any project sponsor who withdraws water on a day when the USGS gage real-time data are unavailable and fails to obtain Commission approval to do so, may receive a Notice of Violation for violating its passby requirement that day.

During any day when the USGS stream gage is offline and no hourly data are available, a project sponsor must continue to maintain its daily log of any withdrawal and report measurements for the specified stream gage as “-32” for ice conditions or “-1” for other instances. These values will trigger a potential violation on the Monitoring Data Website (MDW) reporting page and require that the project sponsor provide a comment or explanation. No other record keeping or reporting by the project sponsor is necessary as Commission staff retain written documentation of its determinations.