

144 FERC ¶ 62,117
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County,
Washington

Project No. 2149-161

ORDER APPROVING QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN PURSUANT TO
LICENSE ARTICLE 401

(Issued August 8, 2013)

1. On June 24, 2013, Public Utility District Number One of Douglas County, Washington (licensee), filed, for Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) approval, a quality assurance project plan (plan) for the Wells Hydroelectric Project. The plan is required by Article 401 of the project license.¹ The project is located on the Columbia River in Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan counties, Washington.

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS AND BACKGROUND

2. Article 401 requires the licensee to file a plan specifying a systematic approach for collecting high-quality, water temperature and total dissolved gas (TDG) data. The purpose of the plan is to supplement the licensee's water quality monitoring program with reliable data to more accurately determine compliance with established monitoring criteria. Per the Washington Department of Ecology's (Ecology) water quality certification (WQC) and Article 401, the licensee must consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville Tribes), Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the development of the plan.

LICENSEE'S PLAN

The licensee's plan outlines methods for monitoring water quality, operating the project to ensure compliance with water temperature and TDG water quality standards, and employing adaptive management if the criteria are not met. The plan relies on the results

¹ Order Issuing New License, 141 FERC ¶ 62,104 (issued November 9, 2012).

of preexisting data, from the licensee's prior monitoring and the hydrologic record, and statistical models to determine operating scenarios that may exceed established criteria.

Water Temperature

3. The Columbia River within the Wells Hydroelectric Project is considered salmon spawning, rearing, and migration habitat. Ecology requires that the seven-day average water temperature must remain below 17.5°C. If natural conditions cause a water body's temperature to average above 17.5°C, human actions may not increase the natural temperature more than 0.3°C. The water temperature record for the project area shows that natural conditions exceed 17.5°C from July through September. Preliminary model analyses have shown that project operations would not increase temperatures more than 0.3°C; however, the proposed plan indicates that the licensee will work with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Sovereign Technical Team Water Quality Workgroup to develop system-wide models for the Columbia River basin.

4. The licensee also proposes to monitor water temperatures in fish ladders every hour during salmonid spawning season, May 1 through November 15, and discontinue trapping operations when temperatures exceed 68.0°F. Prior monitoring data from 2001 and 2003 indicate that the licensee would expect to operate the trap throughout the entire spawning season. Temperature sensors would be installed at representative project boundary locations, including the Chief Joseph Dam tailrace, Okanogan River at river mile (RM) 10.5, and Methow River at RM 1.5. An additional temperature monitoring station would record a full depth profile in the Wells Dam forebay. Three previously installed sensors, located in the Wells Dam fishway, Wells Dam auxiliary water supply, and Columbia River, would also be employed.

Total Dissolved Gas

5. The licensee proposes to install two TDG sensors, in the forebay and tailrace of Wells Dam, to expand their previous monitoring plan and measure TDG year round. The locations are representative of bulk flow entering and leaving Wells Dam. The licensee would also install TDG sensors in the forebay and tailrace of Chief Joseph Dam; however, due to the complex hydrology below the dam interfering with any single location being representative of bulk flow, the licensee proposes to install a third, new TDG sensor at Washburn Island, downstream of the dam. The TDG sensors would collect data every 15 minutes.

6. The licensee proposes using a self-produced playbook, which would be updated annually, to identify the combinations of spill gate and generating unit settings to minimize TDG under varying circumstances. The licensee's playbook, including any annual modifications, would be approved by Ecology.

Data Quality and Management

7. The licensee proposes to calibrate the sensors per factory recommended specifications prior to deployment and serviced in the field on a monthly basis, unless more frequent maintenance is needed. The proposed plan includes appropriate best management practices for calibrations and field inspections of the sensors.

8. The licensee states that the data would be available in real time through the Columbia River Data Access in Real Time website and the licensee's external website. It will also be stored and analyzed internally. The licensee proposes electronically publishing their final data on the project's license implementation website.

Reporting

9. The licensee's proposed plan outlines a schedule for reporting its annual monitoring results. The licensee would have all water temperature and TDG monitoring reports approved by the Aquatic Settlement Working Group (ASWG)² prior to filing the reports with the Commission. The annual TDG monitoring reports would be filed with the Commission by February 28 of the following year for the extent of the project license. The licensee's annual water temperature monitoring reports would be filed with the Commission by April 30 of the following year for the extent of the project license.

CONSULTATION

10. On March 4, 2013, the licensee provided its draft plan to Ecology for review and comment. Ecology, via electronic communication on April 8, 2013, requested clarification in one section of the report, which the licensee added into its plan. On April 16, 2013, the licensee provided its modified draft to the ASWG for review and comment. The licensee additionally hosted a May 8, 2013, conference call with the ASWG to discuss its proposed plan, and the ASWG members in attendance approved the modified draft.³ On May 9, 2013, the Yakama Nation also approved the plan via electronic communication.

² The Aquatic Settlement Working Group consists of at least one representative from each of the following agencies and organizations: FWS, Ecology, WDFW, Colville Tribes, Yakama Nation, and the licensee. The BLM has elected to waive regular participation, but it receives all documents and reserves the right to participate as desired. The BIA participates intermittently as an observer, but it receives all documents and reserves the right to participated as desired.

³ The Yakama Nation did not participate in the telephone conference call.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

11. The licensee would complete the installation of water quality monitoring stations prior to its October 31, 2013 deadline, established by the WQC. The licensee would follow an advanced implementation schedule to allow for required regulatory permitting and review, as necessary.
12. The proposed plan meets and, in some instances, exceeds agency monitoring standards and should provide sufficient guidance to minimize instances of exceeding current water quality standards. The plan also allows for adaptive management, should the proposed measures need immediate adjustment to ensure accurate data collection.
13. The licensee's proposed quality assurance project plan satisfies the requirements of license article 401 for the Wells Hydroelectric Project and should be approved.

The Director orders:

(A) Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County, Washington's (licensee) quality assurance project plan, filed June 24, 2013, pursuant to Article 401 of the Wells Hydroelectric Project (No. 2149), is approved.

(B) This order constitutes final agency action. Any party may file a request for rehearing of this order within 30 days from the date of its issuance, as provided in section 313(a) of the Federal Power Act, 16 U.S.C. § 8251 (2006), and the Commission's regulations at 18 CFR § 385.713 (2013). The filing of a request for hearing does not operate as a stay of the effective date of this order, or of any other date specified in this order. The licensee's failure to file a request for rehearing shall constitute acceptance of this order.

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and Compliance