

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20426
March 8, 2018

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 3211-009 – New York
Hinckley (Gregory B. Jarvis) Hydroelectric Project
Power Authority of the State of New York

Mark Slade, Director of Licensing
New York Power Authority
123 Main Street
White Plains, NY 10601

**Subject: Staff Comments on the Proposed Study Plan for the Hinckley
(Gregory B. Jarvis) Hydroelectric Project**

Dear Mr. Slade:

We have reviewed your Proposed Study Plan for the Hinckley (Gregory B. Jarvis) Hydroelectric Project (Jarvis Project), filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) on December 12, 2017. In addition to our verbal comments provided during the January 11, 2018, proposed study plan meeting, we are providing written comments pursuant to section 5.12 of the Commission's regulations. We anticipate that the New York Power Authority will take our comments into consideration during development of the revised study plan, which must be filed with the Commission by April 11, 2018.

In the attached Schedule A, we provide detailed comments on proposed studies and two additional information requests.

Project No. 3211-009

2

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on your Proposed Study Plan for the Jarvis Project. If you have any questions, please contact Emily Carter at (202) 502-6512, or via email at emily.carter@ferc.gov.

Sincerely,

John B. Smith, Chief
Mid-Atlantic Branch
Division of Hydropower Licensing

Attachments: Schedule A

cc: Cindy Brady, Licensing Manager
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Schedule A
Project No. 3211-009

SCHEDULE A

Comments on the Proposed Study Plan (PSP)

Hinckley Reservoir Bathymetric Survey

1. In the revised study plan (RSP), please indicate the spacing between your proposed transects (plotted in Figure 3.1.7-1 of the PSP) and explain why this spacing is sufficient to capture topographic features (e.g., sandbars) that could affect volume estimates of the reservoir.

2. In the PSP, under Task 4, you state that a volumetric storage table will be provided in the study report, and this table will provide reservoir volumes as a function of reservoir elevations. In the RSP, please indicate the elevations over which reservoir volumes will be estimated (e.g., from full pond, or 1,225 feet,¹ down to an elevation of 1,195 feet) and at what elevation increments (e.g., every 1 foot) reservoir volumes will be estimated.

Recreation and Public Access Study

1. In the PSP, you state that field surveys will be conducted between May 12, 2018 and October 8, 2018, and survey days will be stratified by weekdays, weekends, and holidays during the study period. You also state that survey routes will be completed on a rotating basis and at different times of day to account for time-of-day use patterns. In the RSP, please specify the total number of survey days and describe how the days will be distributed throughout the study period. Please also describe how the survey routes will be rotated and how many times each day the different sites will be visited.

Additional Information Requests

1. In the PSP, you provided the results of simulation analyses that compared reservoir surface elevations, over a 24-hour period, between peaking and non-peaking (constant release) operations. However, this analysis used the historically assumed reservoir volume of 25.8 billion gallons, which does not appear to have been confirmed, or updated, at the time of, or following construction of the reservoir in 1912. The results of your simulations and analyses could change if your proposed Hinckley Reservoir Bathymetric Survey indicates the volume of the reservoir is considerably different than 25.8 billion gallons. For instance, if the volume of the reservoir is considerably less than this historical estimate, then peaking would result in a larger drop in reservoir surface

¹ All elevations herein are reported in Barge Canal Datum. To convert elevations to National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929, subtract 1.04 feet.

Schedule A

Project No. 3211-009

elevations than your analysis indicates. Therefore, to provide a more accurate evaluation of the potential effects of peaking operation on reservoir surface elevations, please re-run these analyses using volume estimates obtained from the Hinckley Reservoir Bathymetric Survey. The results of these updated analyses and simulations, along with a description of your methods, should be filed with your license application, as this will aid staff in determining potential effects of project operation on various resources within and along the reservoir.

2. During public scoping, two stakeholders commented on the potential effects of water level manipulation within Hinckley reservoir on adjacent water supply wells. As a result, Commission staff added a bullet in section 4.2.1 of Scoping Document 2 to indicate that staff's environmental analysis will evaluate the effects of project operation on groundwater and wells within the project boundary. Staff reviewed New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (New York DEC) information on water wells,² and determined that approximately 14 water wells are located in the vicinity of Hinckley reservoir. The New York DEC dataset includes well depth, depth to water, and other information, but it does not detail whether a well is no longer viable, nor does it indicate when an existing well was dug to a greater depth. Although stakeholders suggested that wells have dried up in the vicinity of Hinckley reservoir, no documentation was provided in support of their statements. Nevertheless, so that staff have sufficient information to evaluate the potential effects of water level fluctuations on private wells in the vicinity of Hinckley reservoir, please provide information on any wells in the vicinity of Hinckley reservoir that have ceased functioning (including the location, well depth, and date the well stopped functioning), through contact with private well owners identified in New York DEC's dataset or other information sources.

² <http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/103459.html>

Document Content(s)

P-3211-009letter.PDF.....1-4