RELICENSING THE SKAGIT RIVER HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT
Delivering A Clean Energy Future

Seattle City Light, a publicly owned utility, is in the process of relicensing the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The project is a series of three dams (Gorge, Diablo, Ross) and powerhouses on the Skagit River that generate enough power to meet 20% of the utility’s load.

Renewing the license will allow City Light to continue producing clean, carbon-free energy while also updating the utility’s stewardship of the watershed’s cultural and natural resources. Relicensing is a rare opportunity to reset the management of complex environmental ecosystems, and City Light is working hard to support the species and the communities of the Skagit River.

PARTNERING TO IMPROVE NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

**Collaboration:** City Light collaborates with about 40 partner organizations and interested parties, including Tribes and federal, state, and local agencies, to ensure the river’s cultural and natural resources are enhanced by the new license.

**Science:** We are basing this work on cutting-edge science. Factors related to salmon recovery, including salmon habitat and passage, are a focus of those studies.

**Tribal Engagement:** City Light reached out to Tribes and First Nations early and improved the engagement process to make all voices heard. Engagement grants provided resources to Tribes so they could bring their experts to the table for this multi-year planning process.

Hydropower is the leading renewable energy source in the U.S., and the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project provides about 20% of Seattle City Light’s power. Relicensing takes over five years to complete, and the current license is set to expire in 2025.
CONTINUING STEWARDSHIP OF THE WATERSHED

Improving the watershed ecosystem does not need to be strictly limited to the relicensing process. City Light is working with Tribal and regional partners to move more quickly on key priorities, including:

- **Returning water to the bypass reach**—City Light is responding to Tribes that have requested that more water flow through this culturally important space.

- **Creating the Skagit Habitat Enhancement Fund**—City Light’s new fund is fueling partners’ projects that protect, conserve, and restore the aquatic habitat of the Skagit River watershed.

- **Protecting the Skagit headwaters**—With a binational agreement, the Canadian headwaters of the Skagit River have been preserved from mining. The agreement is independent of relicensing but essential to ensuring the river’s health.

- **Preserving cultural resources**—Tribal artifacts unearthed near the dams have been returned to the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe.

LOOKING FORWARD

City Light’s 1995 license was groundbreaking in the scope of environmental commitments. Under the license, approximately $65 million was spent on downstream fish protection and habitat restoration. That work was guided by a fisheries settlement agreement signed by 11 parties including all of the Tribes in the basin and federal and state regulators. City Light also purchased over 10,000 acres of land in the Skagit River basin to benefit fish and wildlife.

Since 1995, the impact of climate change has been significant, and needs are changing. Robust study is key to understanding the benefits and effects of the project and how the City can support both the watershed’s ecosystem and cultural uses. In close partnership with licensing participants, City Light is leading 33 studies of cultural resources, wildlife and botanical, fisheries, aquatics, and recreation to guide mitigation planning.

The Environmental Learning Center, operated by North Cascades Institute in partnership with City Light and the National Park Service, provides unique environmental education opportunities for people of all ages, including programs focused on reaching children from underserved communities.

SHARED PRINCIPLES, SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

**CORE PRINCIPLES**
- Adopt ecosystem management principles
- Contribute to salmon recovery
- Respect Treaty Tribes & First Nation interests
- Adapt to climate change
- Preserve clean energy resources

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**
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