

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON D.C. 20426
(May 7, 2020)

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 553-235 - Washington
Skagit River Hydroelectric Project
Seattle City Light

VIA Electronic Mail

Reference: Consultation with Tribes for the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project No. 553

To the Tribal Leaders Addressed:

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) invites your participation in the relicensing process for the existing Skagit River Hydroelectric Project No. 553 (Skagit River Project). The Commission's relicensing process is an opportunity for both the licensee and interested agencies, tribes, and other stakeholders to consider the project's existing operation and protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures, and evaluate the need for any changes or additional measures to be implemented over the term of any new license issued for the project. The 650.25-megawatt (MW)¹ Skagit River Project is located on the Skagit River in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties, Washington. Seattle City Light owns and operates the project under a license issued by the Commission and will use the Commission's Integrated Licensing Process to relicense the project. A Notice of Intent and Pre-Application Document were filed with the Commission on April 27, 2020. Seattle City Light's current license for the Skagit River Project expires April 30, 2025 and an application for a new license must be filed by April 30, 2023.

The project consists of three developments: (1) Ross, (2) Diablo, and (3) Gorge.

The Ross Development consists of the following existing facilities: (1) a 540-foot-high concrete arch and gravity diversion dam with two spillways and 12 radial tainter gates; (2) a 11,680-acre reservoir (Ross Lake); (3) two bifurcated intake structures; (4) two 24.5-foot-diameter power tunnels, 1,800 and 1,634 feet long; (5) four 16-foot-diameter penstocks, each 290 feet long; (6) a powerhouse containing four generating units with a total installed capacity of 260.27 MW; (7) two 230-kilovolt (kV)

¹ Seattle City light is currently in the process of amending the project's capacity to increase it to 700.27 MW.

transmission lines extending from the power plant to Diablo Switchyard; and (8) appurtenant facilities.

The Diablo Development consists of the following existing facilities: (1) a 389-foot-high concrete arch and gravity diversion dam with two spillways and 19 radial tainter gates; (2) a 770-acre reservoir; (3) two bifurcated intake structures; (4) a 1,990-foot-long, 19.5-foot-diameter power tunnel; (5) two 290-foot-long, 15-foot-diameter penstocks and two 290-foot long, 5-foot-diameter penstocks ; (7) a powerhouse containing four generating units with a total installed capacity of 182.4 MW; (8) a 230-kV transmission line extending from Diablo Switchyard to the Gorge Switchyard; (9) three 230-kV, 87.5-mile-long transmission lines running from Diablo Switchyard to the Bothell Substation; and (10) appurtenant facilities.

The Gorge Development consists of the following existing facilities: (1) a 300-foot-high combination concrete arch and gravity diversion dam with a 94-foot-wide spillway and two fixed wheel gates; (2) a 240-acre reservoir, (3) an intake structure; (4) a 11,000-foot-long, 20.5-foot-diameter power tunnel; (5) three 10-foot-diameter penstocks and one 15-foot-diameter penstock, each 1,600 feet long; (6) a surge tank; (7) a powerhouse containing four generating units with a total installed capacity of 207.58 MW; (8) a 230-kV, 36.8-mile-long transmission line extending from Gorge Switchyard to the North Mountain substation; and (9) appurtenant facilities.

The project also includes approximately 9,300 acres of fish and wildlife mitigation lands located in the Skagit, Sauk, and South Fork Nooksack Watershed.

Seattle City Light is considering several new facilities and rehabilitation activities at the Skagit River Project to be evaluated during the relicensing process, including: (1) restoring the Diablo Development tailwater area by dredging accumulated deposits in the main channel downstream of the confluence of Stetattle Creek; (2) constructing a new tour dock on the shoreline of Diablo Lake near Seattle City Light's Environmental Learning Center and removing the existing dock located about 0.5-mile downstream and restoring or repurposing the area; (3) constructing a second power tunnel at the Gorge Development; and (4) adding a new pumped-storage storage operation that would use Ross Lake as the upper reservoir and Diablo Reservoir as the lower reservoir. The pumped storage operation would include installing new pumps directly below the existing low level outlet at the Ross Development, a single span of transmission line across the Diablo tailrace, and excavating the bottom of Diablo Lake to provide sufficient submergence for the pumps. The pumped storage operation would result in operational changes, particularly at the Ross Powerhouse, and both Ross and Diablo Reservoirs would experience greater daily fluctuations.

It is very important that a tribe whose interests could be affected by the proposed Skagit River Project participate early in the process so that tribal issues are addressed.

For this reason, please inform us if you have an interest in participating in the relicensing process for the project.

In addition, please indicate if you would like to meet with Commission staff to discuss the Commission's licensing process, how your Tribe can participate to the fullest extent possible, your interests and concerns in the affected area, and how to establish procedures to ensure appropriate communication between Commission and tribal staffs. The meeting can be limited to Commission and your Tribal staff, or can be open to other tribes or Seattle City Light.

If at all possible, we would appreciate your response by June 7. Our regulations require that we hold a meeting with your tribe no later than thirty days from the filing of Seattle city Light's Notice of Intent if a meeting is desired;² however, we are waiving that timeframe to ensure that, if your tribe desires a meeting, we will be able to conduct it at a mutually agreeable time.

The Commission strongly encourages electronic filing. Please file your response using the Commission's eFiling system at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/efiling.asp>. Commenters can submit brief comments up to 6,000 characters, without prior registration, using the eComment system at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/ecomment.asp>. You must include your name and contact information at the end of your comments. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov, (866) 208-3676 (toll free), or (202) 502-8659 (TTY). The first page of any filing should include docket number P-553-235.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Suzanne Novak at (202) 502-6665 or Suzanne.novak@ferc.gov. Suzanne Novak will contact you shortly to follow-up on this letter.

Sincerely,

David Turner, Chief
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Addressees:

² 18 C.F.R. § 5.7.

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