

Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project Document

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FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20426
December 31, 2012

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 14241-000—Alaska
Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project
Alaska Energy Authority

Wayne Dyok
Susitna-Watana Project Manager
Alaska Energy Authority
813 West Northern Lights Boulevard
Anchorage, AK 99503

Reference: Revised Study Plan Determination Schedule

Dear Mr. Dyok:

On December 14, 2012, Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) filed its revised study plan for the Susitna-Watana Project No. 14241 as required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (Commission's) regulations for the Integrated Licensing Process. The revised study plan includes 58 individual studies that AEA proposes to implement to study environmental resources that may be affected by the project.

Commission staff have reviewed the revised study plan and conclude that, of the 58 studies, 45 contain sufficient detail such that the Commission's study plan determination (SPD) on those studies can be completed by February 1, 2013, as set forth in the September 17, 2012, "Notice of Extension of Time To File Comments On AEA's Proposed Study Plan." However, the remaining 13 studies, which are related to water resources, instream flows, and fish and aquatic resources, contain insufficient detail. Therefore, I am modifying the SPD schedule for those studies, pursuant to section 5.29(f)(2) of the Commission's regulations.

In the 13 studies, AEA only provides conceptual details on sampling methods, techniques, analytical approaches, and study site selection (e.g., focus areas). AEA proposes to refine and finalize these details by March 15, 2013, after selecting focus areas and after reviewing the results of open-water flow routing model and initial habitat mapping efforts that will be completed in December 2012.

These study details are integral to determining whether the studies would gather the needed information to process AEA's license application. Consequently, these study details must be finalized prior to the Commission issuing its SPD. Therefore, in order to allow AEA sufficient time to develop these details, AEA must file by March 15, 2013, the following additional information: (1) the implementation plans described in section 9.5.4 of study 9.5, Study of Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Upper Susitna River; section 9.6.4 of study 9.6, Study of Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Middle and Lower Susitna River; and section 9.8.4 of study 9.8, River Productivity Study; and (2) the final site selection for focus areas for all studies to be implemented in the middle and lower Susitna River (study 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9). Furthermore, because the results of the open-water flow routing model and initial habitat mapping will be important in developing the above details, these study results must be filed with the Commission by January 21, 2013, and a meeting must be held with interested stakeholders by February 15, 2013, to discuss the study results, the proposed implementation plans, and the selected focus areas.

By copy of this letter, interested stakeholders are notified of the modification to the process schedule described in Attachment A, and that comments on the 45 other study plans included in AEA's December 14, 2012, revised study plan, are still due by January 18, 2013. The Commission's study plan determination for these 45 studies is scheduled to be issued by February 1, 2013. Agencies with mandatory conditioning authority pursuant to sections 4(e) and 18 of the Federal Power Act or under section 401 of the Clean Water Act may file a notice of study dispute on the Commission's determination on any of these 45 studies relating to their mandatory conditioning authority within 20 days of the study plan determination. The initial and updated study reports for all studies are still due February 3, 2014, and February 2, 2015, respectively.

If you have any questions, please contact David Turner at (202) 502-6091.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wright
Director
Office of Energy Projects

Enclosure: Attachment A—Revised Study Plan Determination Schedule for
December 14, 2012, revised study plan studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5,
7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.

cc: Mailing List
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ATTACHMENT A
REVISED STUDY PLAN DETERMINATION SCHEDULE FOR
DECEMBER 14, 2012, REVISED STUDY PLAN STUDIES 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6,
7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.

A study plan determination will be issued for the following studies in accordance with the schedule below: (1) Baseline Water Quality (study 5.5), (2) Water Quality Modeling Study (study 5.6), (3) Mercury Assessment and Potential for Bioaccumulation Study (study 5.7), (4) Geomorphology Study (study 6.5), (5) Fluvial Geomorphology Modeling Below Watana Dam Study (study 6.6), (6) Groundwater Study (study 7.5), (7) Ice Processes in the Susitna River Study (study 7.6), (8) Fish and Aquatics Instream Flow Study (study 8.5), (9) Riparian Instream Flow Study (study 8.6), (10) Study of Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Upper Susitna River (study 9.5), (11) Study of Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Middle and Lower Susitna River (study 9.6), (12) River Productivity Study (study 9.8), and (13) Characterization and Mapping of Aquatic Habitats (study 9.9).

Shaded milestones are unnecessary if there are no study disputes filed by any agency with mandatory conditioning authority. If a due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the due date is the following business day.

Responsible Party	Pre-Filing Milestone	Date	FERC Regulation
AEA	AEA files results of open-water flow routing model and habitat mapping.	January 21, 2013	N/A
AEA	AEA holds meeting to discuss the study results, proposed implementation plans, and selected focus area sampling sites in the middle and lower Susitna River.	February 15, 2013	N/A
AEA	AEA files studies 9.5 and 9.6, Fish Distribution and Abundance Implementation Plan; study 9.8, River Productivity Implementation Plan; and description of final site selection for any focus areas in the middle and lower Susitna River as described in study 8.5	March 15, 2013	5.13(a) waived

	(including studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9).		
All Stakeholders	Revised Study Plan Comments Due for studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.	April 14, 2013	5.13(b) waived
FERC	Director's Study Plan Determination for studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.	May 14, 2013	5.13(c) waived
Mandatory Conditioning Agencies only	Any Study Disputes Due for studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.	June 3, 2013	5.14(a)
Dispute Panel	Third Dispute Panel Member Selected	June 18, 2013	5.14(d)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Convenes	June 23, 2013	5.14(d)(3)
AEA	Applicant Comments on Study Disputes Due	June 28, 2013	5.14(i)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Technical Conference	July 3, 2013	5.14(j)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Findings Issued	July 23, 2013	5.14(k)
FERC	Director's Study Dispute Determination	August 12, 2013	5.14(l)