

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
Washington, D. C. 20426

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 637-096--Washington
Lake Chelan Hydroelectric Project
PUD No. 1 of Chelan County

October 2, 2017

Jeffrey Osborn
Compliance Program Manager
PUD No. 1 of Chelan County
P.O. Box 1231
Wenatchee, Washington 98807-1231

Subject: Notice of temporary change in pumped flow to habitat channel for fall 2017

Dear Mr. Osborn:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your September 18, 2017 filing with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) notifying us of a temporary change in pumped flow to the habitat channel for the Lake Chelan Hydroelectric Project, FERC No. 637. Flows are provided pursuant to license Article 408, the Chelan River Biological Evaluation and Implementation Plan,¹ Water Quality Certification condition IV.E, and Settlement Agreement Article 7(c)(2).² The requirements anticipate that adjustments may be required once flow in the habitat channel was implemented and allow for flow adjustments in order to provide optimal habitat for Chinook and steelhead.

You are required to provide a minimum flow of 320 cubic feet per second (cfs) to the Chelan River habitat channel during the steelhead and Chinook salmon spawning seasons. You provide flow via five pumps at a calculated 240 cfs at minimum tailwater elevation which is added to 80 cfs minimum flow from the lake. When combined, these

¹ During relicensing, the licensee, at the request of Ecology created the Chelan River Biological Evaluation Plan to facilitate Ecology in developing a 401 water quality certification for the project. The plan was then incorporated into the settlement agreement.

² Order On Offer Of Settlement And Issuing New License (117 FERC ¶ 62,129), issued November 6, 2006.

flows ensure that the minimum 320 cfs is provided to the habitat channel. The flow regime described above is meant to ensure that the required 320 cfs reaches the habitat channel under “minimum” tailwater elevations; however, under “normal” tailwater elevations you have determined the actual flow in the habitat channel to be 340-350 cfs.

Your staff, Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Washington DFW) have observed over the last several years that the water velocities in the habitat channel provided by the five pumps combined with the flow from the lake appear to be too high, particularly for steelhead spawning and Chinook fry early rearing. Therefore, in your consultation with the resource agencies and the Chelan River Fishery Forum, it has been decided to reduce the flow to the habitat channel by operating four rather than five pumps, which in combination with the 80 cfs minimum flow, provides approximately 260 cfs to the habitat channel rather than the 320 cfs in the license requirements. You have been implementing this reduced flow regime periodically after notification to the Commission, since 2013 for the Chinook salmon spawning periods (October 15-November 30) and since 2014 for the steelhead spawning periods (March 15-May 15).

The monitoring of spawning Chinook and steelhead that you have conducted over the last several years has determined that the reduced flow is preferred. In a filing with the Commission on March 13, 2017, you requested to amend the Operations Compliance Monitoring Plan, Threatened and Endangered Species Protection Plan, and Appendix A (Settlement Agreement Articles) to change the minimum pumped flow requirement. That request is currently under Commission review. At this time, you are waiting on Ecology to act on your request to revise the Water Quality Certification requirements on minimum pumped flow. As such, your September 18, 2017 filing is to provide notice to the Commission regarding your temporary operation change from the five pump requirement, to 4 pumps for the fall 2017 Chinook spawning period.

You are required to file Biological Objectives Status Reports pursuant to the Commission’s Order Approving Threatened and Endangered Species Protection Plan Under Article 408³ and the Commission’s Order Revising Threatened and Endangered Species Protection Plan Schedule Under Article 408.⁴ Your 2013, 2015, and 2017 reports have included the results of your evaluation of the flow adjustment on spawning

³ 121 FERC ¶ 62,143 (issued November 28, 2007).

⁴ 131 FERC ¶ 62,151 (issued May 19, 2010).

habitat. You have reported that the four pump configuration provides the best flow conditions for the habitat channel. Please continue to include these results in your Biological Objectives Status Report. Your next report is due by April 30, 2019.

This letter acknowledges your September 18, 2017 filing with the Commission to temporarily adjust the habitat channel flow by operating four rather than five pumps during the fall Chinook spawning period from October 15 through November 30, 2017

Thank you for providing us notice of your temporary modification. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at (202) 502-6289.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Ballantine".

Robert Ballantine
Aquatic Resources Branch
Division of Hydropower Administration
and Compliance