

151 FERC ¶ 62,122
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Public Utility District No. 1 of Chelan County

Project No. 637-040

ORDER ACCEPTING WHITEWATER BOATING REPORT AND AMENDING
RECREATION RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN

(Issued May 20, 2015)

1. On April 29, 2015, Public Utility District No. 1 of Chelan County (licensee) filed a whitewater boating report for years 2012 through 2014 for the Lake Chelan Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 637). The project is located on the Chelan River, near the City of Chelan, in Chelan County, Washington. The project occupies federal lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service.¹
2. In 2012, an order amending the project's Recreation Resources Management Plan (RRMP) was issued after the licensee completed a whitewater boating monitoring study.² The order approved several modifications to the whitewater boating section of the RRMP that were recommended by the licensee and agreed to by American Whitewater (AW). These include: annual whitewater flow releases scheduled for the third Saturday and Sunday in September, at 375 and 400 cubic feet per second (cfs), respectively; continued paddler use of a reservation system that includes both on-line and on-site registration; and paddler adherence to various requirements concerning safety, equipment, and liability. The amended RMPP also requires that surveys of paddlers be conducted following each release, an annual meeting be held between the licensee and AW, and a report evaluating whitewater boating releases, including recommendations on future releases, be submitted to the Commission every three years.
3. Ordering paragraph B of the aforementioned order requires the licensee to file the whitewater boating report every three years beginning May 1, 2015. The licensee must include in the report documentation of consultation with AW, and copies of comments

¹ The federal lands are in Wenatchee National Forest and the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area of North Cascades National Park.

² See Order Amending the Recreation Resources Management Plan under Article 407 (140 FERC ¶ 62,051), issued July 16, 2012.

and recommendations on the report. The licensee must allow a minimum of 30 days for AW to comment and to make recommendations prior to filing the report with the Commission. If the licensee does not adopt a recommendation, the filing must include the licensee's reasons for not doing so, based on, among other things, any relevant project-specific information. Ordering paragraph B also states that any recommendations for changes to the RMPP require Commission approval.

4. The licensee's April 29, 2015 filing describes whitewater releases and paddler participation levels in 2012, 2013, and 2014. Reported release dates (third Saturday and Sunday in September) and volumes (375 cfs on Saturday and 400 cfs on Sunday) are consistent with those required in the RMPP. A total of 121 paddlers participated, including 51 in 2012, 38 in 2013, and 32 in 2014. The paddler reservation system functioned as set forth in the RMPP.

5. Every participant during each year covered by the report was invited to fill out a survey evaluating their experience. The licensee received 31 completed surveys in 2012, 25 completed surveys in 2013, and 6 completed surveys in 2014. Most respondents were "extremely satisfied" and felt flows were acceptable and crowding was not a problem. All respondents agreed that paddlers should be allowed to self-regulate launch times, rather than be given a set launch time to minimize crowding.

6. Based on monitoring and survey results, the licensee recommends no changes to whitewater release dates, flows, evaluation methods, or the reservation system. The licensee does, however, request Commission approval to modify the reporting schedule, changing it from every three years to every 10 years, with the next report due by May 1, 2026.

7. On April 3, 2015, the licensee submitted a draft whitewater boating report to AW for review and comment. On April 28, 2015, AW responded in a letter, included in the licensee's filing, which states that AW is satisfied with the licensee's "well managed" whitewater release program. AW believes that current opportunities are well matched to existing demand and concurs with the licensee's proposal to change the reporting interval to every 10 years.

8. The licensee's whitewater boating report adequately describes and evaluates whitewater releases at the project in 2012, 2013, and 2014. The report describes release dates, volumes, and paddler participation, the reservation system, and post-release survey efforts and results. As such, the report satisfies the reporting requirement of ordering paragraph B of the Commission's July 16, 2012 order amending the RMPP.

9. The licensee's filing indicates that although paddler participation has declined since 2012, survey respondents report high levels of satisfaction with the current program. AW's letter supports this finding. Therefore, the licensee's recommendation to make no change to program operations is reasonable.

10. Given that the current program is met with such high satisfaction and that AW concurs, the licensee's recommendation to change the frequency of the whitewater boating report from every three years to every 10 years is also reasonable. However, the licensee's recommendation to make the next report due May 1, 2026 would mean 11 years of data collection transpire by the next report's due date. A report covering the next 10 years of program operations should be due May 1, 2025, documenting flow releases September 2015 through September 2024. With this modification, the licensee's request to make the whitewater boating report due every 10 years is reasonable and should be approved.

The Director orders:

(A) Public Utility District No. 1 of Chelan County's whitewater boating report for the Lake Chelan Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 637), filed April 29, 2015, is accepted and its request to modify the frequency of the whitewater boating report, from every three years to every 10 years, as modified below by paragraph (B), is approved.

(B) The licensee must file the whitewater boating report required by ordering paragraph B of the Commission's Order Amending Recreation Resource Management Plan under Article 407, issued July 15, 2012, by May 1, every ten years. The next report is due on or before May 1, 2025.

(C) This order constitutes final agency action. Any party may file a request for rehearing of this order within 30 days from the date of its issuance, as provided in section 313(a) of the FPA, 16 U.S.C. § 8251 (2012), and the Commission's regulations at 18 C.F.R. § 385.713 (2014). The filing of a request for rehearing does not operate as a stay of the effective date of this order, or of any other date specified in this order. The licensee's failure to file a request for rehearing shall constitute acceptance of this order.

Robert J. Fletcher
Chief, Land Resources Branch
Division of Hydropower
Administration and Compliance

Document Content(s)

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