

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
Washington, D. C. 20426

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 2485-068 – Massachusetts
Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project
FirstLight Hydro Generating Company

Mr. Gus Bakas, Director
FirstLight Hydro Generating Company
99 Millers Falls Road
Northfield, MA 01360

July 22, 2015

Subject: Notice of Temporary Closure of Recreational Trails

Dear Mr. Bakas:

Thank you for your letter, filed July 1, 2015, concerning the temporary closure of a section of the recreational trail system at the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage project (FERC No. 2485). As discussed below, we find this temporary closure reasonable and ask that you notify the Commission when trails are reopened.

You propose to close, for public safety reasons, about 14 percent of the project's trail system while a transmission line and associated facilities are constructed on lands adjacent to the project.¹ Trails proposed for closure are those in the immediate vicinity of construction. You anticipate construction beginning in September 2015 and taking up to one year to complete. You would notify the public about the closure on the project's recreation webpage and Facebook page, and by posting signage and a map at your visitor center. Trail closure signage would also be installed on-site. As necessary, a worker would be posted at trail crossings during construction activities.

You also propose to permanently relocate 1,800 linear feet of existing cross-country ski trails to shift them away from a fence and access road associated with the new transmission line. It appears from your filing that this relocation would be minor in scope and primarily affect trails outside of the project boundary. As such, an amendment to your recreation plan would not be necessary. You propose to include relocated ski trails in your new license application, which you intend to file no later than April 30, 2016.

Your proposed trail closure is reasonable given its temporary and partial nature. Your plans to notify the public about it are acceptable. Please notify the Commission, no later than September 30, 2016, when the trails have been reopened. If trails have not been

¹ Trails within the project boundary connect to trails on adjacent lands operated and maintained by FirstLight pursuant to a private agreement.

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reopened by September 30, 2016, your filing should explain why and propose a new reopening date based on the date by which you expect the transmission line and associated facilities to be completed.

Also, though your letter indicates that trail closure signage would be posted at the locations where closure begins, it is unclear if warning signage, similar to what you plan to post at the Visitor Center, would be posted at other trailheads. Please take effort to post such warning signage at other trailheads that access the project's trail system.

Thank you for your letter and careful attention to your project's recreation resources. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 202-502-6465.

Sincerely,

Kevin P. Anderson
Outdoor Recreation Planner
Division of Hydropower
Administration and Compliance