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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

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City of Gonzales, Texas

Project No. 2960-005

NOTICE OF INTENT TO FILE LICENSE APPLICATION,
FILING OF PREAPPLICATION DOCUMENT (PAD),
COMMENCEMENT OF PRE-FILING PROCESS, AND SCOPING;
REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON THE PAD AND SCOPING DOCUMENT,
AND IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES
AND ASSOCIATED STUDY REQUESTS

Thursday, October 22, 2015

6:00 p.m.

City Building
820 St. Joseph Street
Gonzales, Texas 78629

ON BEHALF OF FERC:
RACHEL McNAMARA
MICHAEL SPENCER
888 First Street
Washington, D.C. 20426

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MS. McNAMARA: I'll go ahead and open the
3 meeting. This is the evening scoping meeting for the
4 Gonzales project that's FERC Number 2960. My name is
5 Rachel McNamara, and I am the relicensing coordinator for
6 the project.

7 I think everyone has already signed in. Just a
8 few reminders before we start: You can ask clarifying
9 questions as we go. This can be fairly informal.

10 When you're speaking, please state your name
11 and the entity that you're representing. If the spelling
12 is complex or could be confused, please make sure you
13 spell it. If you use an acronym, please define the
14 acronym.

15 Talk one at a time, and written comments can be
16 filed either directly with the Commission -- that's our
17 preference -- using our efilings procedure. You can also
18 leave them here with the court reporter or you can make
19 your oral comments, which is why we have the reporter
20 here.

21 And all comments on the preliminary application
22 document, the PAD, the scoping document 1, and requests
23 for studies are due by November 21.

24 So as I said, I'm Rachel McNamara. We'll get
25 into introductions with everybody else here shortly. In

1 addition to being the project coordinator, I am the
2 subject matter expert for recreation land use and cultural
3 resources.

4 With me I have Michael Spencer. He is our
5 engineer and does development resources, and then in our
6 Washington office Adam Peer is the aquatic resources
7 specialist, and Nick Tackett is our terrestrial resource
8 specialist, and they also deal with threatened and
9 endangered species for their respective areas.

10 The City of Gonzales has chosen to use the
11 Commission's integrated licensing process; that's our
12 default process for relicensing hydropower projects. They
13 filed their NOI and PAD on July 24. We issued our
14 scoping document actually I think on September 18; the due
15 date for that was the 22nd. And we're here at the scoping
16 meeting now on the 22nd of October.

17 So scoping is driven by NEPA, the National
18 Environmental Policy Act, and the goal of the scoping
19 process is to identify environmental and other resource
20 issues that we should know about while we're going through
21 this undertaking.

22 So project is a federal undertaking because we,
23 a federal agency, are granting a license to the City of
24 Gonzales for the continued operation of the hydropower
25 project.

1 And so we'll use issues identified during the
2 scoping process to inform our NEPA analysis. At this
3 point we intend to issue a single EA, a single environment
4 analysis for the project, but at some point in the future
5 we could determine that we need to either do a draft and
6 final or an environmental impact statement if the resource
7 issues warranted that level of analysis.

8 And at this time we also want to eliminate from
9 study any issues that aren't readily apparent or would be
10 problematic for the project.

11 So going forward the next few things that are
12 happening are the comments that are due, and November 21
13 falls on a weekend, so the filing deadline is actually the
14 close of business, five o'clock on the Monday; five
15 o'clock Eastern, since you all are in Central time.

16 And then between January and June we'll be
17 going through a study planning process. The City is able
18 to -- in their PAD preliminarily presented a list of
19 studies they thought were necessary. We're looking for
20 your comments to look at any other areas that need to be
21 studied, and then the City will give us a preliminary
22 study plan, and that will be filed on January 5.

23 And so from there we kind of go through a
24 series of meetings and discussions or comments to refine
25 the studies. And then following our study plan

1 determination in early June, there will be two years of
2 study. Studies can be designed to take the full two
3 years, or they could take place in either of the two
4 years.

5 And then in March of 2018, that's when we would
6 expect the preliminary licensing proposal, or the draft
7 license application.

8 So July 2018 is when the license application
9 would be due. That marks two years before the license
10 expires. And so the current license expires in July 2020,
11 and the goal of the ILP is to have you a new license for
12 the project before the current license expires.

13 So at this point I'm going to turn it over to
14 Charlotte Garraway, who will talk about the project.

15 (Pause.)

16 MS. GARRAWAY: I don't know why my PowerPoint
17 is not being helpful at all today. I'll just, like I did
18 earlier, do the project summary -- there we go.

19 All right. So I'm Charlotte Garraway, with
20 Schneider Engineering.

21 So a brief project history: The Gonzales
22 project was initially developed in 1925 by Central Power
23 and Light of Corpus Christi. They operated this project
24 in 1965, when the facility was abandoned.

25 In 1980 the City sought to rehabilitate the

1 powerhouse, so they restored the existing turbines and
2 replaced the generators. Today the project consists of a
3 dam, reservoir, powerhouse, tailrace channel, distribution
4 lines, and the transformer.

5 The project location is here in Gonzales
6 County. It's on the Guadalupe at River Mile 167, and its
7 street address is 301 Water Street.

8 So we'll just go through some photos of the
9 project, if you haven't been out there. So this first
10 photo shows the dam, taken from downstream, looking up.

11 Then you have the intake structures, going into
12 the powerhouse; the headrace looking upstream; the
13 powerhouse itself; the tailrace fishing area, which is
14 like kind of a concrete area below the powerhouse.

15 So project operations: It's currently run as a
16 run-of-river operation. They have to have flows in excess
17 of 200 cfs and a minimum of nine feet head for it to
18 operate.

19 Generation over the past five years has
20 averaged 1,314 megawatt-hours annually, and there's no
21 proposed facilities or operational changes associated with
22 the relicensing.

23 The interconnection: The facility is connected
24 through a riser pole at the hydro facility, and it's
25 connected through 7.2/12.5 kV distribution lines, and it

1 connects back up to the Gonzales substation.

2 That line that connects to the Gonzales
3 substation follows along 183 and traverses that roadway
4 twice, then makes a left turn down Theo Street, crosses
5 Theo, and follows Harborth Street up to the substation.
6 There's approximately 130 feet of overhead line within the
7 project boundary.

8 MS. McNAMARA: So as I was mentioning before,
9 this is the appropriate time to start thinking about the
10 information that you all as participants in the
11 relicensing can provide to the Commission to help in our
12 decision making.

13 So those things include significant
14 environmental issues that we should address, and you can
15 comment on our list of preliminary issues that we provided
16 in the scoping document.

17 You can request studies using the seven study
18 criteria that are on the following slide. You can provide
19 data that wasn't available to the City when they were
20 preparing the PAD. You can also provide additional
21 comments on the PAD or on our scoping document, and you
22 can file with the Commission comprehensive plans, resource
23 plans, or any other future proposals that we should know
24 about that may affect the relicensing of the project.

25 So one of the biggest issues that we face when

1 we're looking at study requests are their adequacy in
2 addressing the seven study criteria. Those are mandated
3 by the regulations that we use for the ILP.

4 And so ask that the -- any requested studies
5 follow these criteria, and those are really looking at the
6 goals and objectives of the study, explaining what -- if
7 you're a resource agency, what your resource management
8 goals are in relation to the study request and, if you're
9 not an agency, explaining what the public interest
10 considerations for requesting the study.

11 We also need to know what existing information
12 exists and what benefit the study would be in providing
13 new information that doesn't already exist.

14 Most importantly, we need to understand the
15 nexus between the project and the resource being affected,
16 so explaining why project operations or why the
17 relicensing proposal may affect the resource.

18 And then explain the preferred methodology and
19 kind of where that methodology came from and the cost and
20 level of effort for conducting the study.

21 So I'll just, one last time, reiterate the
22 comment periods: Comments on the PAD and scoping document
23 1 are due November 21. If there are substantive comments
24 on scoping document 1, the Commission will issue a scoping
25 document 2 on January 5. There are no comments -- we

1 don't receive comments on scoping document 2.

2 But scoping document 2 should capture any
3 comments we receive today or any that are filed between
4 now -- or that have already been received and November 21.

5 On January the City will submit its proposed
6 study plan, and there will be a comment period for that.
7 Comments are not due until April 4, but there will also be
8 a meeting in between the filing of the plan and the
9 deadline for filing comments, and that should be in early
10 February.

11 Based on those comments, the City will issue a
12 revised study plan in early May. There will be comments
13 on that study plan, and then the Commission will take into
14 account all of the meetings and the comments that we
15 received to issue a study plan determination in early
16 June.

17 So that would be the final set of studies that
18 the City would need to conduct over that two-year period.
19 And then disputes on those studies can be filed by the end
20 of June.

21 As I was mentioning at the beginning, there are
22 several ways to file comments. The easiest and preferred
23 way for the Commission is using the efilings tool on
24 FERC.gov.

25 We also highly recommend that if you're

1 interested in the project, you esubscribe. That will give
2 you an email update anytime something happens in the
3 project docket, so anytime something is issued or
4 submitted.

5 If you're interested in being on the mailing
6 list and you're not on the mailing list that was included
7 in the scoping document, you need to request in writing to
8 be added to the mailing list, and there are instructions
9 in the scoping document as how to do that.

10 But the mailing list only receives hard copies
11 of Commission issuances, whereas efilings you receive
12 notifications of all filings for the project.

13 So now I will go ahead and open the floor up
14 for comments. Please come to the microphone if you have
15 anything you'd like to say -- comments or questions.

16 MR. BOTROS: I guess I'd like to clarify
17 something. This is John Botros, Texas Parks & Wildlife.
18 That's B-O-T-R-O-S.

19 I made some comments about possibly some
20 passage, you know -- eel passage being an important factor
21 to consider. I did say that eels travel upstream to
22 spawn. That's not actually correct.

23 Eels travel upstream to mature, and once they
24 mature, they actually travel back downstream to the coast,
25 to the Sargasso Sea, to spawn. So I just wanted to make

1 that clarification, that there are no spawning habitats
2 upstream; it's all just where they go and mature. I just
3 wanted to make that point.

4 MS. McNAMARA: Okay.

5 MR. BOTROS: One other thing that I'd like to
6 just make -- go ahead and get on the record is, you know,
7 that the river authority here, the GBRA, the Guadalupe-
8 Blanco River Authority, they do have a big project
9 proposed within this part of the river segment, and I
10 don't know if that project needs to be considered in this
11 process or not, but it's -- they're talking about a big
12 diversion somewhere within Gonzales County.

13 It's not quite clear about where, but there are
14 concerns that it ends up right here. So just be sure
15 that's considered when we go forward.

16 MS. McNAMARA: Okay.

17 MR. BOTROS: I think that's it. Thank you.

18 MS. McNAMARA: Are there other questions or
19 comments?

20 (No response.)

21 MS. McNAMARA: I guess one thing that we should
22 add into the record from the Commission's perspective is
23 that it would be helpful in the PAD to have information
24 about the municipal water withdrawals that are located
25 right basically at the dam. That would help inform the

1 decisions that we make, and we need information about
2 those.

3 Otherwise, I think our comments were captured
4 earlier, and we'll provide written comments on the PAD.

5 Barring any further comments, well, thank you
6 for coming to the scoping meeting. I will go ahead and
7 close for the evening.

8 Thank you.

9 (Whereupon, at 6:19 p.m., the public hearing
10 was concluded.)

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