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# FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20426

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## NEWS RELEASE

### NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:

Celeste Miller  
(202) 502-8680

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Docket No. RM02-16-000

### **COMMISSION MOVES TO OVERHAUL HYDRO LICENSING PROCESS, PROPOSES MORE EFFICIENT AND TIMELY PROCEDURES**

In a sweeping proposal aimed at streamlining the licensing of hydroelectric projects, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission today unveiled a comprehensive plan that will result in a more efficient and timely process while balancing stakeholder interests and improving the quality of decision making.

The proposal, referred to as the "integrated" process, would become the Commission's primary licensing process, with the existing alternative licensing process (ALP) and the traditional process remaining as options for applicants in certain situations.

The major benefits of the proposed rule are:

- increased assistance by Commission staff to the potential applicant and stakeholders during the development of a license application;
- greater coordination among the Commission and federal and state agencies with mandatory conditioning authority;
- the Commission's environmental scoping process to be carried out in conjunction with the applicant's pre-filing consultation;
- increased public participation in the pre-filing consultation process;
- establishing schedules and deadlines for all participants, including Commission staff;

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- development of a Commission-approved study plan by the applicant, with informal resolution to study disagreements, followed by mandatory, binding study dispute resolution, if necessary; and
- elimination of the need for post-application study requests.

The NOPR proposes to create a new position at the Commission of Tribal Liaison. This person would be the point of contact for Native Americans' concerns regardless of the proceeding or issue.

The traditional licensing process would be modified by increasing public participation, and by establishing mandatory, binding dispute resolution for necessary studies.

Prior to issuing the NOPR, Commission staff held regional forums around the country to discuss a new licensing process. Also, drafting sessions were held in Washington, D.C. to more fully discuss the comments received at the forums as well as develop draft regulatory language.

In addition, regional workshops will be held in March in Washington and around the country to discuss stakeholder concerns about the proposed rule. A four-day workshop in April in Washington has been scheduled to develop draft language for the final rule. Details on these events can be found at [www.ferc.gov/hydro/docs/hydro\\_rule.htm](http://www.ferc.gov/hydro/docs/hydro_rule.htm).

Parties have 60 days after the issuance of the NOPR to file comments either on paper or electronically via the Internet. Paper filings should be submitted to the Office of the Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20426. All comments should reference docket number RM02-16-000.

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