



July 27, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20426

**Subject: Byllesby-Buck Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2514-186)
First Quarterly Study Progress Report, Updated ILP Study Schedule, and
Request for Extension of Time to File Initial Study Report**

Dear Secretary Bose:

Appalachian Power Company (Appalachian or Applicant), a unit of American Electric Power (AEP) is the Licensee, owner, and operator of the 30.1 megawatt (MW) Byllesby-Buck Hydroelectric Project (Project No. 2514-186) (Project or Byllesby-Buck Project), located on the New River in Carroll County, Virginia. The Project is currently undergoing relicensing following the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC's or Commission's) Integrated Licensing Process (ILP).

The purposes of this filing are to (1) inform FERC and Project stakeholders of revised timeframes for conducting certain field activities to be performed pursuant to the approved ILP Study Plan for the Project and (2) request Commission approval of a modification to the approved ILP Process Plan and Schedule that would extend the filing deadline for the Initial Study Report (ISR) for the Project from November 17, 2020 to January 18, 2021. As further explained below, these modifications are required in light of ongoing and presently anticipated resource and schedule challenges associated with the ongoing Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic and are not expected to impact Appalachian's ability to timely file an application for a new license by the statutory deadline (February 28, 2024).

This filing also serves as Appalachian's First Quarterly Study Progress Report for the Project. This progress report describes the activities performed since this Study Plan Determination (SPD), as well as ILP activities generally expected to be conducted in quarter 3 (Q3) of 2020.

Background

In accordance with 18 CFR §5.11 of the Commission's regulations, Appalachian developed a Revised Study Plan (RSP) for the Project that was filed with the Commission and made available to stakeholders on October 18, 2019. On November 18, 2019 FERC issued the Study Plan

Determination (SPD). On December 12, 2019, Appalachian filed a clarification letter on the SPD with the Commission. The SPD was subsequently modified by FERC by an Order on Rehearing dated February 20, 2020. The RSP, as subsequently approved and modified by the FERC, establishes Appalachian's proposed schedule to complete desktop and field activities and develop reports for the following studies. A proposed study schedule is included in the RSP for each of the studies listed below:

1. Flow and Bypass Reach Aquatic Habitat Study;
2. Water Quality Study;
3. Aquatic Resources Study;
4. Wetlands, Riparian, and Littoral Habitat Characterization Study;
5. Terrestrial Resources Study;
6. Shoreline Stability Assessment Study;
7. Recreation Study; and
8. Cultural Resources Study.

Updated Study Schedule and Study Progress

Appalachian's intent, at the time of filing the RSP, was to complete ILP study activities in the first ILP study season (2020) to the greatest extent possible. The study schedules were based on an expectation of commencing field work by early April and developing draft study reports and the ISR by mid-November 2020.

Appalachian commenced the Recreation Study in November 2019 and installed trail cameras to capture recreation use at Project facilities. Data from the installed cameras have been downloaded approximately monthly by Appalachian and Appalachian's consultant. Appalachian notes that Trail Camera #6, installed at the Buck Dam Picnic Area, has been out of service since May 18, 2020 due to the tree falling down and is expected to be reinstalled in a similar location on July 28, 2020. The Recreation Facility Inventory and Condition Assessment was completed in the fall of 2019. Additionally, Appalachian initiated the recreation visitor use online survey on April 27, 2020 and distributed notification of the availability of the online survey to interested agencies. Signs prompting visitors to complete the survey were installed at Appalachian's recreation facilities in May.

Due to prevailing restrictions on non-essential travel and safety considerations for staff who would be traveling for and performing fieldwork, Appalachian and Appalachian's consultants have not been able to commence fieldwork for the other studies (i.e., studies requiring intensive periods of fieldwork in the spring) as originally proposed in the RSP. Appalachian and Appalachian's

consultants continue to monitor evolving conditions and presently anticipate commencing field study activities in early August 2020. As a result, conduct of several season-sensitive spring field studies will have to be deferred until the second (2021) study season, and the study period for the water quality study will be shortened (though notably is still expected to include the majority of the targeted low inflow and high temperature season). Other studies that would potentially have commenced in the spring or early summer are expected to be shifted to the mid- to late summer or fall seasons. On a resource allocation basis, Appalachian does not expect to be able to complete all of the required ILP study activities within the remaining study season. As such, Appalachian proposes to also shift the timing for conducting studies that are more baseline condition-characterization in nature to 2021.

A detailed schedule is attached (Attachment 1), which shows the schedule proposed in the RSP (as modified by the SPD and subsequent Order on Rehearing) alongside the revised proposed schedule.

Appalachian shared an earlier version of this table with the primary resource agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality) and conducted a conference call on June 30, 2020 to review the revised study schedule and solicit agency feedback and comments. Participants in this meeting concurred with Appalachian's proposed schedule revisions, and minor revisions to the schedule were made based on comments received during this meeting, as documented in the meeting summary included in Attachment 2.

Request for Extension of Time to File the ISR

Because the study delays forced by COVID-19 conditions are expected to lead to significant field study activities continuing through the fall of 2020, it will not be feasible to develop draft study reports and a comprehensive ISR by the November 17, 2020 deadline. Appalachian believes that a comprehensive ISR, inclusive of draft study reports where possible, will be to the benefit of the ILP process for this Project, as well as to Project stakeholders. As such, Appalachian is requesting that the deadline to file the ISR be extended to January 18, 2021. Appalachian does not propose and is not requesting any subsequent adjustment of the ISR deadline (November 21, 2021).

Appalachian notified the agencies listed above of Appalachian's intention to file a request for extension of time to file the ISR (and the subsequent shift of the ISR meeting and comment deadline into early 2021) during the June 30, 2020 conference call. As indicated in the attached meeting summary, participants in this meeting did not express any opposition to or concerns with this request.

Appalachian notes the extraordinary circumstances that have shifted the ILP study schedule for the Project and believes this request is consistent with guidance from the Commission and

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First Quarterly Study Progress Report, Updated ILP Study Schedule, and Request for Extension of Time
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Commission staff regarding potential impacts of COVID-19 on non-statutory deadlines and required notifications to and approvals by FERC. Appalachian thanks the Commission staff for their consideration of this request and hopes that this filing finds Commission staff and Project stakeholders in good health.

If there are any questions regarding the proposed ILP study schedule changes, please do not hesitate to contact me at (540) 985-2441 or via email at ebparcell@aep.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elizabeth Parcell
Process Supervisor
American Electric Power Services Corporation

Attachments (2)

cc: Distribution list

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ATTACHMENT 1

ILP STUDY SCHEDULE UPDATE

Table 1. Proposed Changes to the 2020-2021 Study Plan Schedule for the Byllesby-Buck Project (FERC No. 2514)

Proposed Scheduling Changes to the 2020-2021 Study Plan Schedule for the Byllesby/Buck Project (FERC No. 2514)			
Study	Activities	Approved Timeframe for Completion (RSP and SPD)	Proposed Timeframe for Completion (July 2020 update)
Flow and Bypass Reach Aquatic Habitat Study	Topographic Mapping and Photogrammetry Data Collection	Fall 2019	Completed (January 2020)
	Desktop Habitat Assessment	November 2019 – March 2020	July – August 2020
	Mesohabitat Mapping and Substrate Characterization Field Data Collection	Summer 2020	August – September 2020
	Distribute Proposed Flow Test Scenario Framework to Interested Parties for Review	May 2020	August 2020
	Conduct Flow and Water Level Assessment and Hydraulic Modeling	June – October 2020	July – December 2020
	Distribute Draft Study Report with the ISR	November 2020	January 2021
Water Quality Study	Study Planning and Existing Data Review	January – March 2020	July 2020
	Continuous and Monthly Water Quality Monitoring (Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature)	May – September 2020	Late July* – September 2020 * Conditioned on completion of reinstallation of flashboards tripped during May 2020 high flow event
	Turbidity Monitoring Study	June – August 2020	August – September 2020
	Distribute Draft Study Report with the ISR	November 2020	January 2021

Proposed Scheduling Changes to the 2020-2021 Study Plan Schedule for the Byllesby/Buck Project (FERC No. 2514)

Study	Activities	Approved Timeframe for Completion (RSP and SPD)	Proposed Timeframe for Completion (July 2020 update)
Aquatic Resources Study	Desktop Literature Review	January – March 2020	July – August 2020
	Macroinvertebrate and Crayfish Community Study	March – August 2020	August – September 2020 (target September), April – May 2021
	Fish Community Study	April – September 2020	September 2020, April – May 2021
	Mussel Community Study	April – September 2020	August – September 2020
	Desktop Impingement and Entrainment Evaluation	August – November 2020	September – December 2020
	Distribute Draft Aquatic Resources Study Report with the ISR/USR	November 2020	January 2021/November 2021
Wetlands, Riparian, and Littoral Habitat Characterization	Desktop Mapping of Wetland, and Riparian, and Littoral Habitats	January – March 2020	February – April 2021
	Field Verification of Preliminary Maps and Wetland Delineations and Riparian and Littoral Habitat Characterizations	August 2020 – September 2020	Late July – August 2021
	Distribute Draft Study Report with the USR	November 2020	November 2021
Terrestrial Resources Study	Desktop Mapping and Study Planning	February – March 2020	February – April 2021
	Field Verification	April – July 2020	April – July 2021
	Distribute Draft Study Report with the USR	November 2020	November 2021

Proposed Scheduling Changes to the 2020-2021 Study Plan Schedule for the Byllesby/Buck Project (FERC No. 2514)

Study	Activities	Approved Timeframe for Completion (RSP and SPD)	Proposed Timeframe for Completion (July 2020 update)
Shoreline Stability Assessment Study	Study Planning and Data Review	January – March 2020	February – April 2021
	Shoreline Survey and Determination of Areas Potentially Needing Remediation	April – July 2020	April – July 2021
	Distribute Draft Study Report with the USR	November 2020	November 2021
Recreation Study	Study Planning and Existing Data Review	November 2019 – March 2020	Completed (November 2019)
	Trail Camera Data Collection	November 2019 – November 2020	November 2019 – November 2020
	Recreation Facility Inventory and Condition Assessment	November – December 2019	Completed (November 2019)
	Stakeholder Site Visit/Meeting	April 2020	October – November 2020* *Conditioned on no travel and meeting restrictions; if meeting not completed in the fall of 2020 will be rescheduled for spring 2021
	Recreation Visitor Use Online Survey	April – October 2020	April – October 2020
	Distribute Draft Study Report with the ISR	November 2020	January 2021
Cultural Resources Study	Determination of Area of Potential Effect (APE)	January – June 2020	July – September 2020
	Background Research and Archival Review	January – June 2020	August 2020 – November 2020
	Phase I Reconnaissance Survey of APE	May – October 2020	April – July 2021
	Inventory of Traditional Cultural Properties	October 2019 – October 2020	August 2020 – August 2021
	Review and Updates to the Existing CRMP	November 2020	November 2021
	Distribute Draft Study Report with the ISR/USR	November 2020	November 2021

ATTACHMENT 2

JUNE 30, 2020 MEETING SUMMARY

Subject: FW: Byllesby-Buck Project Relicensing Study Schedule Update Meeting Notes
Attachments: ByllesbyBuck ILP Study Schedule UPdate 06 22 2020.pdf

From: Elizabeth B Parcell [mailto:ebparcell@aep.com]

Sent: Friday, July 17, 2020 4:07 PM

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Cc: Yayac, Maggie <Maggie.Yayac@hdrinc.com>; Kulpa, Sarah <Sarah.Kulpa@hdrinc.com>; Jonathan M Magalski <jmmagalski@aep.com>

Subject: Byllesby-Buck Project Relicensing Study Schedule Update Meeting Notes

CAUTION: [EXTERNAL] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

I hope you are well and ready for the weekend.

Attached please find the draft summary of our discussion from a couple of weeks ago regarding the updated ILP study schedules and request to FERC for extension of the deadline to file the ISR. We plan to include a copy of this summary in the upcoming FERC filing. Please provide any comments or questions on the attached summary as soon as you can get to it, or no later than the end of next week.

Thanks and have a great weekend.

Liz



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Meeting Summary

Project: Byllesby-Buck Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2514)

Subject: Study Schedule Update

Date: Tuesday, June 30, 2020

Location: WebEx (2:00pm-3:00pm)

Attendees: Bill Kittrell (VDGIF)
John Copeland (VDGIF)
Janet Norman (USFWS)
Joe Grist (VDEQ)
Jon Magalski (AEP)
Liz Parcell (AEP)
Sarah Kulpa (HDR)
Maggie Yayac (HDR)

Introduction

Liz (AEP) thanked everyone for being available to discuss the Byllesby-Buck Project and explained that the purpose of the meeting would be to discuss the changes to the ILP study schedule due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and related concerns. Liz noted that a revised schedule was provided in the meeting invite. AEP plans on filing the revised schedule with FERC, which will include an extension of time for the Initial Study Report (ISR) (January 18th) and ISR meeting (February 2nd).

Study Schedule Update

- Sarah (HDR) explained that AEP is currently planning on initiating field studies in July and expects to continue field work through the fall, potentially into November if needed. Time-sensitive spring studies that were not able to be completed due to travel restrictions have been re-scheduled for the spring of 2021. AEP is aiming to collect field data this year in support of the bypass reach, aquatic resources, and water quality studies, where doing so is compatible with the remaining study season, and studies that are more baseline characterization in nature are being postponed to 2021. This will allow AEP and their consultants to appropriately allocate resources to priority studies.
- AEP plans on filing the revised schedule with FERC and will also be requesting an extension of time to file the Initial Study Report and to conduct the Initial Study Report meeting. Sarah noted that this schedule change will not affect the schedule for filing of the Updated Study Report in 2021 or the overall licensing schedule. The extension is being requested to provide more time for AEP and their consultants to develop preliminary or draft study reports for filing with the ISR, following the completion of field activities this fall. Jon M. (AEP) also noted the extension of time

avoids a review period for the agencies over the holidays. There was no opposition to the proposed request for extension of time.

Flow and Bypass Reach Aquatic Habitat Study

- LiDAR data and orthoimagery have been captured at the Byllesby-Buck Project and HDR will be using this information to begin building the hydraulic model to support the Flow and Bypass Reach Aquatic Habitat Study (i.e. identify level logger placement, flow test scenarios, etc.). Additionally, the flow test scenarios will be developed and sent to agencies for review and comment in late July/early August. Janet noted that she will be out of office the last week of July and first week of August. AEP and HDR agreed to target the first week of August to get the flow test scenarios to this group, for a 2-week review and comment period.
- Flow tests are scheduled to take place in mid to late August/early September dependent on flow conditions. Sarah noted the test timing is dependent on no spill conditions at the developments. (Flashboard repairs are ongoing at Byllesby and currently scheduled to be completed within the next 3 weeks.)

Water Quality Study

- Sarah explained that the updated study schedule water quality monitoring (continuous and monthly sampling) is expected to begin in late July and continue through the end of September (can be continued into October if September is a hot/dry month). Agencies will have opportunity to review results of this monitoring in the ISR and provide feedback on the quality and quantity of the data at the ISR Meeting, with respect to whether the abbreviated water quality monitoring period is sufficient to meet the study objectives.
- VDGIF agreed that the revised timeframe for the Water Quality Study, while shorter, is the time to target (high temperature/lower inflow conditions) and noted that flows were high this spring.
- Sarah confirmed the turbidity monitoring study is still proposed for this study season (August-September). Discussion of timing of study given higher flows and more angling in May-July period. Jon M. explained the intent of the original schedule in the RSP, which was to try to capture incremental turbidity impacts of trashrake operation during lower flow (i.e., worse case) condition and during fishing season, as VDGIF had previously requested. John C. (VDGIF) agreed that the turbidity monitoring is preferred under a low flow condition and during fishing season and questioned whether adding an additional turbidity study in early July 2021 would be possible. Group agreed this would be evaluated at the ISR and based on the results of this year's study.

Aquatic Resources Study

- Sarah explained that the Fish Community Study will still be conducted in August or September. John C. agreed this time period is adequate since there will be some young-of-year fish.

- AEP is rescheduling the spring season of the fish community and macroinvertebrate and crayfish studies for 2021. No objections from agencies. John C. noted that based on his experiences with these sites, the survey scheduled for the spring (April-May) may have to be shifted to later in May or even June if high flow conditions prevail through the spring.
- The mussel survey is expected to be conducted in August or September, which is within the original timeframe. VDGIF noted Brian Watson (VDGIF) may typically do these surveys earlier in the year and that they'd like his concurrence with the August-September timeframe.
 - **Action Item:** AEP's consultant (Stantec) to follow up with Brian Watson to confirm the timing of the mussel survey. (Note Stantec sent e-mail to Brian Watson on 7/13, no response received yet.)
- HDR plans on providing 2020 results in a preliminary study report that would also include a preliminary desktop impingement and entrainment study. The final fish community study report would be prepared at the end of 2021 as part of the Updated Study Report.
- Janet (USFWS) would like AEP/HDR to consult with USFWS's fishway engineer to ensure parameters of blade strike analysis are sufficient prior to conducting. **Action Item:** Janet will connect Sarah to the USFWS fishway engineer.

Wetland, Riparian, and Littoral Habitat, Terrestrial Resources, Shoreline Stability and Cultural Studies

- Desktop and fieldwork rescheduled for spring-summer 2021.
- John C. questioned the timing of the field verification for the Wetland, Riparian and Littoral Habitat and noted VDGIF may prefer the survey take place in the late summer/early fall, which is the best time to survey for aquatic vegetation. Sarah reminded the group that the original schedule was intended to accommodate/overlap the Virginia spiraea flowering season, in the event any spiraea are present (none expected based on results of 2017 and prior surveys, as well as historical records). Janet agreed that the USFWS would like the survey to account for *Virginia spiraea*. **Action Item:** Check *Virginia spiraea* flowering and surveying timeframe as the group would like this to overlap with VDGIF request to identify aquatic vegetation. (Note AEP sent *Virginia spiraea* survey timeframes to Janet and has updated the survey window in the revised ILP study schedule to be filed with FERC to late July/August). VDGIF agreed that if the survey targeted late July, that should be sufficient to observe elodea and hydrilla.
- John C. noted preference that the Shoreline Stability Assessment take place in early spring (i.e. March to early April), if possible.

Recreation Study

- Trail camera observations have been on-going since November 2019 and are scheduled for completion this November. If any observations are obtained from the

cameras that may be of interest to VDGIF (sited managed by VDGIF) but not directly relevant to the Recreation Study Report, AEP will share that information directly with VDGIF.

- AEP has begun the online survey data collection. It is presently expected to continue through this November. VDGIF asked about potential to extend the period of data collection through 2021. AEP and HDR agreed this would be a relatively incremental effort and may be reasonable to do so; issue to be reevaluated at ISR (or if/when online survey proposed to be taken offline).
- Stakeholder meeting and site visit is not yet scheduled. Agencies and AEP agreed that pushing the stakeholder site visit as far out as possible would be preferable. Schedule has been updated to October-November, with potential to reschedule for the spring of 2021 if needed due to travel restrictions or concerns.
- Bill noted this is an irregular recreation usage year due to COVID-19 and they have seen usage increase at their recreation facilities so far this spring and summer.

Other

- AEP plans on submitting an update to FERC shortly and would like to include a record of consultation with the agencies and verbal agreement that there was no opposition. This will also serve as the first ILP Quarterly Progress Report.
- Agency representatives on the call agreed that they are in agreement with the schedule adjustments and AEP's request for extension of time to file the ISR.
- VDGIF noted the name of their agency is changing to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR) as of 7/1/2020.