

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
Washington D.C. 20426

Office of Energy Projects

Project No. 2301-034 and 040—Montana
Mystic Lake Hydroelectric Project
PP&L Montana, LLC

July 30, 2014

Mr. Jon Jourdonnais
PP&L Montana, LLC
45 Basin Creek Road
Butte, MT 59701-9704

Subject: 2013 Fisheries Monitoring Report and Updated Fisheries Monitoring Plan

Dear Mr. Jourdonnais:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your 2013 Fisheries Management Report, filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) on June 20, 2014. The U.S. Forest Service's (FS) Section 4(e) Condition No. 16 requires you to implement a fisheries monitoring plan¹ that assesses fisheries and aquatic habitat conditions to ensure that project operations are not adversely affecting aquatic resources. Monitoring must occur in Mystic Lake, as well as in West Rosebud Creek, between Mystic and Emerald lakes. Condition No. 16 specifies that the monitoring must be conducted on a six-year cycle for the term of the license.²

Your Fisheries Monitoring Plan³ summarizes the funding, committee operation, research, reporting, and scheduling elements required by Condition No. 16. Pursuant to the Commission's October 1, 2010, letter accepting your plan, you must file annual reports with the Commission, concurrently with your annual reports to the Advisory

¹ The U.S. Forest Service 4(e) Conditions are made a part of the project license through ordering paragraph (E) of the Commission's December 17, 2007, Order Issuing New License.

² Order Issuing New License. 121 FERC ¶ 62,198 (issued December 17, 2007).

³ See August 2, 2010, filing with the Commission.

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Committee,⁴ documenting your monitoring results. Your plan also includes provisions to file an updated Fisheries Management Plan with the Commission in 2016 and every six years thereafter.

Your 2013 report indicates that you conducted electrofishing below Emerald Lake, habitat monitoring in West Rosebud Creek, and redd surveys in the Mackay section of West Rosebud Creek, as outlined in your plan. Due to hazardous stream conditions impacting your electrofishing and low catch rates, you were unable to accurately estimate trout populations below Emerald Lake in 2013. As such, you intend to repeat your electrofishing efforts in 2014 to improve your estimates.

You also report that you conducted rainbow trout redd surveys during the spring of 2013, where you observed four redds, which lies within the range of your observations recorded since 2008. In fall 2013, you documented 37 brown trout redds, which also lies within the range of your previous observations.

Your report also includes a schedule of fisheries monitoring activities for implementation in 2014. As previously discussed, you plan to resample fish populations below Emerald Lake. You also intend to continue counting spring and fall redds in the Mackay section of West Rosebud Creek, as in 2013. You would also monitor fish populations between the dam and the powerhouse, as well as in Emerald Lake. Lastly, you would monitor water temperatures throughout the project area.

In your report, you also propose filing annual reports with the Advisory Committee, and filing summary reports with the Commission by June 1, 2016, and every six years thereafter. Your report includes concurrence with this request, from: the U.S. Forest Service; the Montana Division of Environmental Quality; and the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. You previously proposed a similar reporting schedule in your August 2, 2010, plan. However, in our October 1, 2010, letter, we requested copies of your annual reports, in order to better monitor your work conducted under the plan.

While the Commission remains interested in your fisheries monitoring results, the request to discontinue filing annual reports with the Commission is reasonable. Your 2010 through 2013 reports have demonstrated acceptable results, as well as a commitment to accurately representing fish populations in the project area and ensuring

⁴ The Advisory Committee is comprised of: the FS; the Montana Division of Environmental Quality; and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

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collaboration with the Advisory Committee. Additionally, you have not deviated from the requirements of the Fisheries Monitoring Plan since its implementation, and provided documentation of the Advisory Committee's concurrence with the modified reporting schedule. As such, we find the proposed reporting schedule acceptable.

Thank you for your cooperation. We look forward to your first, six-year summary report and updated Fisheries Monitoring Plan, **due June 1, 2016**. If you have any questions concerning this letter please contact me at (202) 502-8038 or alicia.burtner@ferc.gov.

Sincerely,

Alicia Burtner
Fish Biologist
Division of Hydropower Administration
and Compliance

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