

time allowed for filing a protest. If a protest is filed and not withdrawn within 30 days after the time allowed for filing a protest, the instant request shall be treated as an application for authorization pursuant to section 7 of the Natural Gas Act.

David P. Boergers,

Acting Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket No. OA96-155-001]

Midwest Energy, Inc.; Notice of Filing

January 7, 1998.

Take notice that on August 15, 1997, Midwest Energy, Inc., tendered for filing an amendment in the above-referenced docket.

Any person desiring to be heard or to protest said filing should file a motion to intervene or protest with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20426, in accordance with Rules 211 and 214 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (18 CFR 385.211 and 18 CFR 385.214). All such motions or protests should be filed on or before January 16, 1998. Protests will be considered by the Commission in determining the appropriate action to be taken, but will not serve to make protestants parties to the proceeding. Any person wishing to become a party must file a motion to intervene. Copies of this filing are on file with the Commission and are available for public inspection.

David P. Boergers,

Acting Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Project No. 2016-WA]

Tacoma Public Utilities; Notice of Tacoma Public Utilities' Request to Use Alternative Procedures in Filing a License Application

January 7, 1998.

By letter dated December 16, 1997, Tacoma Public Utilities (Tacoma) asked

to use an alternative procedure in filing an application for a new major license for its Cowlitz River Project No. 2016.¹ Tacoma has demonstrated that they have made an effort to contact all resource agencies, Indian tribes, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and others affected by the applicant's proposal, and that a consensus exists that the use of an alternative procedure is appropriate in this case. Tacoma also submitted a communication protocol and a Memorandum of Agreement that is supported by most interested entities.

The purpose of this notice is to invite any additional comments on Tacoma's request to use the alternative procedure, as required under the final rule for Regulations for the Licensing of Hydroelectric Projects.² Additional notices seeking comments on the specific project proposal, interventions and protests, and recommended terms and conditions will be issued at a later date.

The alternative procedure being requested here combines the prefiling consultation process with the environmental review process, allowing the applicant to complete and file an Environmental Assessment (EA) in lieu of Exhibit E of the license application. This differs from the traditional process, in which the applicant consults with agencies, Indian tribes, and NGOs during preparation of the application for the license and before filing it, but the Commission staff performs the environmental review after the application is filed. The alternative procedure is intended to simplify and expedite the licensing process by combining the prefiling consultation and environmental review processes into a single process, to facilitate greater participation, and to improve communication and cooperation among the participants. The alternative procedure can be tailored to the particular project under consideration.

Applicant-Prepared EA Process and the Cowlitz Project Schedule

On May 3, 1996, Tacoma distributed an Initial Stage Consultation document for the Cowlitz Project to state and federal resource agencies, Indian Tribes, and NGOs. Tacoma scheduled a consultation meeting and site visit for all interested parties on June 26 and 28,

¹ The 462-megawatt project consists of the Mayfield Dam and Powerhouse, Mossyrock Dam and Powerhouse, Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery, Cowlitz Trout Hatchery, Mossyrock Park, Taidnapam Park, and other associated facilities.

² 81 FERC ¶ 61,103 (1997).

1996, respectively, to solicit study requests from participants. Tacoma also held a public meeting in Mossyrock, Washington on June 27, 1996, to solicit comments on the relicensing of the Cowlitz Project. Notices announcing the meetings and site visit were published locally, as required by Commission regulations.

Tacoma has been working collaboratively with the various interested entities to refine the scope of studies identified during the initial consultation meetings and during subsequent resource group meetings. On April 10, 1996, Tacoma issued a report describing the results of aquatic studies completed in 1996. On November 24, 1997, Tacoma distributed a technical report summarizing the scope, method, and results of all studies completed in 1997.

Public scoping meetings are planned for Spring 1998. Notice of the scoping meetings and requests for additional studies will be published at least 30 days prior to the meetings. The application, including any applicant-prepared EA, must be filed with the Commission on or before December 31, 1999, which is two years before the date of expiration of the existing license.

Comments

Interested parties have 30 days from the date of this notice to file with the Commission, any comments on Tacoma's proposal to use the alternative procedures to file an application for the Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project.

Filing Requirements

The comments must be filed by providing an original and 8 copies as required by the Commission's regulations to: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Office of the Secretary, Dockets—Room 1A, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20426.

All comment filings must bear the heading "Comments on the Alternative Procedure," and include the project name and number (Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project, No. 2016).

For further information, please contact David Turner of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission at (202) 219-2844 or e-mail at david.turner@ferc.fed.us.

David P. Boergers,

Acting Secretary.

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