

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory
Commission

[Project Nos. 1980, 1759, 2072, 2073, 2074,
and 2131]

**Wisconsin Electric Power Company;
Notice of Applicant-Prepared
Environmental Assessment Team
Meetings Associated with the Upper
Menominee River Basin Projects**

February 22, 1999.

Pursuant to the Energy Policy Act of 1992, and as part of the license applications, Wisconsin Electric Power Company (Wisconsin Electric) intends to prepare an Applicant-Prepared Environmental Assessment (APEA) for the Upper Menominee River Basin Projects and file it with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission). On February 22, 1996, Wisconsin Electric filed a license application for the Big Quinnesec Project (P-1980) and has included the project in the APEA process. Wisconsin Electric also proposes to file with the Commission a surrender application and APEA for the Sturgeon Project (P-2471).

The following is a list of the 1999 schedule of meetings for the APEA Team to discuss comments received on the draft license applications and the preliminary draft APEA, and finalize the license applications, surrender application, and APEA. The meetings will be conducted at Wisconsin Electric's office, starting at 8:30 a.m., located in Iron Mountain, Michigan. The Commission staff anticipates attending the April meeting.

The APEA Team will meet: April 13-15, 1999, May 18-20, 1999, July 20-22, 1999, and September 21-23, 1999.

If you would like more information about the Upper Menominee River Basin Projects, please contact one of the following individuals: Patti Leppert-Slack, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Room 72-33, Washington, DC 20426, (202) 219-2767, E-mail: patricia.leppertslack@ferc.fed.us

Rita Hayen, P.E., Wisconsin Electric Power Company, 333 W. Everett Street, Milwaukee, WI 53203, (414) 221-2413, E-mail:

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David P. Boergers,

Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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**Notice of Scoping Meeting and
Soliciting Scoping Comments for an
Applicant Prepared Environmental
Assessment Using the Alternative
Licensing Process**

February 22, 1999.

a. *Type of Application:* Alternative Licensing Process.

b. *Project No.:* 346.

c. *Applicant:* Minnesota Power, Inc.
d. *Name of Project:* Blanchard Hydroelectric Project.

e. *Location:* On the Mississippi River, downstream of the City of Little Falls, in Morrison County, Minnesota.

f. *Filed Pursuant to:* Federal Power Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 791(a)-825(r).

g. *Applicant Contact:* Bob Bohm, Minnesota Power, Inc., P.O. Box 60, Little Falls, MN 56345, (320) 632-2318 (ext. 5042).

h. *FERC Contact:* Any questions on this notice should be addressed to Tom Dean, E-mail address thomas.dean@ferc.fed.us, or telephone (202) 219-2778.

i. *Deadline for filing scoping comments:* April 23, 1999.

All documents (original and eight copies) should be filed with: David P. Boergers, Secretary Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 888 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20426.

The Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure require all intervenors filing documents with the Commission to serve a copy of that document on each person whose name appears on the official service list for the project. Further, if an intervenor files comments or documents with the Commission relating to the merits of an issue that may affect the responsibilities of a particular resource agency, they must also serve a copy of the document on that resource agency.

j. *Description of the Project:* This Blanchard Project consists of the following existing facilities: (1) a 750-foot-long, 62-foot-high concrete gravity dam comprising: (a) a 190-foot-long non-overflow section; (b) a 437-foot-long gated spillway section; (c) eight 44-foot-wide by 10.5 feet-high Taintor gates; and (d) a 124-foot-wide integral powerhouse; (2) approximately 3,540-foot-long earth dikes extending from both sides of the concrete dam; (3) a 1,152-acre reservoir at normal water surface elevation of 1,081.7 feet msl; (4) a powerhouse containing three generating units with a total installed capacity of 18,000 kW; and (5) other appurtenances.

k. *Scoping Process:*

Minnesota Power, Inc. (Minnesota Power) intends to utilize the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (Commission) alternative licensing process (ALP). Under the ALP, Minnesota Power will prepare an Applicant Prepared Environmental Assessment (APEA) and license application for the Blanchard Hydroelectric Project.

On September 21, 1998, Minnesota Power requested, and on November 16, 1998, obtained the Commission's approval to use the ALP.

Minnesota Power expects to file with the Commission, the APEA and the license application for the Blanchard Hydroelectric Project by August 2001.

The purpose of this notice is to inform you of the opportunity to participate in the upcoming scoping meetings identified below, and to solicit your scoping comments.

Scoping Meetings

Minnesota Power and the Commission staff will hold two scoping meetings, one in the daytime and one in the evening, to help us identify the scope of issues to be addressed in the APEA.

The daytime scoping meeting will focus on resource agency concerns, while the evening scoping meeting is primarily for public input. All interested individuals, organizations, and agencies are invited to attend one or both of the meetings, and to assist the staff in identifying the environmental issues that should be analyzed in the APEA. The times and locations of these meetings are as follows:

Daytime Meeting

Wednesday, March 24, 1999, 1:00 p.m., Country Inn and Suites, 209 16th Street NE, Little Falls, Minnesota 56345.

Evening Meeting

Wednesday, March 24, 1999, 7:00 p.m., Country Inn and Suites, 209 16th Street NE, Little Falls, Minnesota 56345.

To help focus discussions, Minnesota Power will mail SDI outlining the subject areas to be addressed in the APEA to the parties on the Minnesota Power's mailing list. Copies of the SDI also will be available at the scoping meetings.

Based on all written comments received, a Scoping Document II (SDII) may be issued. SDII will include a revised list of issues, based on the scoping sessions.

Objectives

At the scoping meetings, the staff will: (1) summarize the environmental issues