



Hydropower License Planning and Compliance

Background

Under the authority of the Federal Power Act, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has the exclusive authority to license most non-federal hydropower projects located on navigable waterways or federal lands, or connected to the interstate electric grid. Department of Water Resources (DWR) has three hydropower licenses and two conduit exemptions, which are exempt from relicensing requirements under the Federal Power Act. These give FERC jurisdiction over 85 percent of the 1,560 Megawatts hydropower capacity of the State Water Project (SWP) and 70 percent of the 5.6 million-acre-foot storage capacity in SWP reservoirs. The hydropower licenses contain terms and conditions related to:

- Public safety and recreation
- Operational reliability
- Dam safety
- Water and energy supply
- Environmental and cultural resources

Southern California Facility Relicensing

DWR began FERC relicensing efforts for its Southern California facilities in 2015. Two power facilities – Devil Canyon and South SWP, which includes the Warne and Castaic power developments – have licenses that are set to expire in January of 2022. Two additional Southern California facilities, Alamo Powerplant and Mojave Siphon, have conduit exemptions.

Hydropower License Planning and Compliance Office

The DWR Hydropower License Planning and Compliance Office (HLPCO) serves as the centralized focal point for planning, managing, coordinating, leading, and supporting SWP hydropower license activities. HLPCO's main responsibilities are:

- Overseeing compliance with all license conditions for the SWP hydropower facilities under the jurisdiction of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and other federal and state agencies.
- Managing activities and strategies for securing new licenses and renewing/amending existing licenses.
- Monitoring activities involving other FERC licensed projects for possible effects on the SWP.

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HLPCO tracks, communicates, and coordinates DWR's compliance with their FERC licenses, serving as DWR's primary contact with FERC on all hydropower license compliance matters, and works to create an internal culture of proactive compliance across DWR. HLPCO is responsible for assessing DWR's commitment of resources and funding for license compliance, monitoring and reporting compliance performance, and fostering uniform compliance practices. Specific FERC license compliance responsibilities are shared by many other divisions and programs within DWR.

Meeting Overview

At the August meeting, HLPCO Relicensing Program Manager Jeremiah McNeil will update the Commission on the progress of FERC relicensing efforts for the Southern California facilities and provide updates on the two conduit exemptions.

Goal Two of the Commission's Strategic Plan directs them to remain apprised of the operations and construction activities of the State Water Project, focusing on how the SWP adapts and responds to hydrological extremes expected with climate change, restores critical ecosystems, and addresses aging infrastructure. This briefing provides input to the Commission's 2020 SWP review.

This is an information item.

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