

**MEETING NOTES**  
**Stevens Creek Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2353)**

**SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTRIC & GAS COMPANY**  
**Agency and NGO Outreach Meeting**

**January 10, 2019**

Final KMK 2-1-19

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**ATTENDEES:**

Amy Bresnahan (SCE&G)	James Sykes (USACE)
Bill Argentieri (SCE&G)	Elena Richards (Savannah Riverkeeper)
Caleb Gaston (SCANA)	Tonya Bonitatibus (Savannah Riverkeeper)
Paula Marcinek (GADNR – WRD)	Tony Hicks (private individual)
Madeline Banyas (GADNR – EPD)	Tom Proctor (land owner)
Delaine Scott (GADNR – EPD)	Bill Stringer (SC Native Plant Society)
Ed Bettross (GADNR – Fisheries)	Alison Jakupca (Kleinschmidt)
Chris Thomason (SCDNR)	Kelly Kirven (Kleinschmidt)
Elizabeth Miller (SCDNR)	Jason Moak (Kleinschmidt)
Bill Marshall (SCDNR)	Henry Mealing (Kleinschmidt)
Ron Ahle (SCDNR)	
Elizabeth Johnson (SC SHPO)	
Stacy Rieke (GADNR – HPD) – via conf. call	
Debbie Wallsmith (GADNR – HPD) – via conf. call	

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*These notes are a summary of the major points presented during the meeting and are not intended to be a transcript or analysis of the meeting.*

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the Stevens Creek Hydroelectric Project and its operations, the upcoming relicensing process and potential resource issues at the Project. The PowerPoint presentation from the meeting is attached to the end of these notes and is available on the Project website at [www.stevenscreekrelicense.com](http://www.stevenscreekrelicense.com).

Alison opened the meeting with introductions and then gave a brief overview of the relicensing process and the public meetings held in November 2018. Amy provided a brief overview of Project operations and explained that the Stevens Creek Project re-regulates flows released from the upstream U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Thurmond Dam. Amy said that each day the USACE provides SCE&G with a daily average flow and SCE&G then releases flows from Stevens Creek Dam continuously to meet that daily average.

Alison told the group that the Pre-Application Document (PAD) is due to be filed with FERC in 2020. She said that SCE&G will distribute a draft PAD to the agencies to review prior to filing with FERC. In the meantime, SCE&G is requesting that agencies provide them with any existing information they may have on the Project that can be incorporated into the PAD. Kleinschmidt will

distribute a PAD Information Questionnaire to agencies and NGOs within the next few weeks requesting information. SCE&G also wants to scope out potential studies and submit study plans to FERC with the PAD. Meetings will be held throughout 2019 and early 2020 to develop these study plans.

Alison asked the agency personnel if the public had expressed any concerns to them regarding the Project and existing recreation sites. No concerns were expressed. Ed asked if there was any potential for recreation below the dam. Alison explained that FERC prefers for recreation sites to be within the Project boundary. If stakeholders and licensees agreed to develop a recreation site outside of the Project boundary, FERC either won't agree to this, or will require the licensee to expand the Project boundary to include the recreation site. Bill A. said that in the Project's current license, stakeholders and SCE&G agreed to develop a fishing pier downstream of the dam. However, there was an archaeological site in the area that required protection. In this case, FERC required SCE&G to develop a recreation area inside the Project boundary on the Georgia side which was part of Columbia County's Riverside Park. Elena asked if the Mims recreation site had any potential for further development and established amenities. Bill A. said that this site is in the Project's existing Recreation Plan, however it is located on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land and the USFS hasn't prioritized development at the site. Bill A. said that SCE&G needs to talk to FERC about this and determine if further development is needed during the current license term. A recreation study is likely to occur during relicensing to determine utilization of existing sites and the potential need for new site development and/or upgrades at existing sites.

The group discussed soils and geology at the Project. Alison said that SCE&G performs annual shoreline erosion surveys at the Project and this information will be included in the PAD. Tom said that the Modoc fault line is located close to the dam. Amy said she wasn't aware of that fault line, however it hasn't appeared to cause any issues at the Project. Bill M. asked if there was any concern about sediment in the reservoir. Amy said that sedimentation was mentioned as a potential issue during the public meetings in November 2018, particularly in Stevens Creek. Amy said that sedimentation can be an issue at the confluence of Stevens Creek and the Savannah River but does not currently affect project operations. Members of the public mentioned that they often had to navigate inside of the buoy lines upstream of the dam in order to access the main river channel. Bill M. asked if there were any operational requirements regarding sediment management. Amy said that there aren't any in the current license. She also mentioned that flows have been particularly high for the last two months, which may result in a change in sediment load and sediment deposits in the Project area.

The group discussed water quality and quantity associated with the Project. SCE&G has a large amount of existing data since they complete annual reports for the Project using USGS data. Water quality at Stevens Creek has been improving due to water quality improvement efforts upstream at Thurmond. Bill S. asked if SCE&G was aware of a wastewater discharge on Plum Branch. Bill A. said this was outside of the Project boundary but it could affect water quality at the Project. Alison said that SCE&G will apply for a new 401 water quality certificate from Georgia. She said that typically the application is submitted after the Final License Application is filed. Madeline and Delaine asked if there were any requirements in the existing license for monitoring or improving dissolved oxygen downstream of the Project. Amy said that SCE&G monitors water quality immediately downstream of the dam.

The group discussed fish and aquatics at the Project. SCDNR is currently completing fish studies on Stevens Creek and will have reports available soon. Ron said that SCDNR recently hired a new malacologist, Morgan Kern, who is focusing on the Carolina heelsplitter, a mussel that has potential to occur within the Project boundary. A question was asked about the Project boundary and why it doesn't extend any downstream of the dam. Henry explained that the City of Augusta's Diversion Dam is located within a mile downstream of Stevens Creek Dam and so there isn't any riverine influence.

Tonya provided a list of questions and concerns she had regarding the Project. She asked if there was any opportunity for SCE&G to work with USACE to lessen the flow fluctuations from Thurmond Dam. She also said that fish passage at Stevens Creek will eventually happen and suggested that SCE&G be proactive about addressing fish passage rather than wait for passage to be installed downstream. Tonya said that fish passage installations could be used as an educational tool. She is also working to have the water quality standards for this section of the Savannah River reclassified from "fishing" to "recreation". She indicated that this stretch of the river is a popular active recreation area and that SCE&G should consider constructing a recreation site downstream of the Project. Tonya also said that she would like to see canoes and kayaks be able to move through the locks at the Project or through a rock weir. She also mentioned rocky shoals spider lilies (RSSL) in Stevens Creek, a few small dams in Stevens Creek in poor condition, and silt/sedimentation out of Stevens Creek as issues that need to be considered during relicensing. Bill S. said that Dr. Donna Ware and Dr. Judy Gordon have been studying local RSSL populations for 20 years and could be a resource for information. He also mentioned a small concrete dam that the SC Native Plant Society owns that might be eligible for removal.

Alison said that the public mentioned concerns over aquatic vegetation in the Project reservoir. Amy said that this aquatic vegetation has caused operational issues for SCE&G. SCE&G has never sprayed the vegetation. Tonya suggested dropping the water level during freezing temperatures as a natural way to kill off the plants. Henry said he has seen approximately 9 or 10 different species of aquatic vegetation in the reservoir. Since the reservoir shoreline is heavily vegetated, there isn't much shoreline erosion.

The group discussed reservoir and downstream fluctuations. Ron mentioned the development of a plan to consider fluctuations during fish spawning seasons. Tonya said she would like to see flows tweaked in an effort to hold the reservoir more stable. Amy said that there are some scheduled maintenance and repairs that will occur in the near future that should make the plant more efficient, including replacing flashboards. Bill M. said that he sees the Stevens Creek Project as one that provides a service to the river downstream by providing more stable downstream flows due to re-regulation of flows from Thurmond. The existing license requires Stevens Creek to re-regulate flows from Thurmond. Henry said that simple modeling could show how the downstream is affected from varying fluctuations.

The group discussed rare, threatened and endangered species at the Project. Carolina heelsplitter, RSSL, robust redhorse, redeye bass, trillium, bats and vultures at Stallings Island were all mentioned as species to consider.

Other issues mentioned during the meeting are listed below.

- Chris asked about the buffer zone at Stevens Creek and whether it was maintained in a natural state. Bill A. said SCE&G doesn't do anything in the buffer zone. SCE&G doesn't own most of the land and only has flowage rights in most areas.
- The group discussed whether there was a need for a Shoreline Management Plan and that currently the USACE permits docks on Stevens Creek reservoir. Elizabeth M. asked if SCE&G has a general permit for the Project area. Bill A. said he didn't think they did.
- The group reiterated the need for a recreation study. Tonya will provide a list of vendors that use the area and will provide data she has on special events that take place in the area.
- A cultural study was completed in the 1990s and likely doesn't need to be repeated. An HPMP and PA were developed in 2004 and may need to be updated if operational changes occur as a result of relicensing. Also, the documents may need to be updated regarding Stallings Island including how to protect the resource and increase awareness.
- SCE&G mentioned they will contact local tribes separately and address any issues they may have.
- After the meeting, Tom submitted an additional issue he would like addressed through relicensing. He said there are hundreds of stumps in Stevens Creek that provide navigation issues. He would like to see the stumps either removed or cut, or a navigation channel marked.

The next meeting will likely occur in the spring of 2019. During this meeting, the group will develop Resource Conservation Groups and begin developing study plans. Action items from this meeting are listed below.

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*ACTION ITEMS:*

- Kleinschmidt will distribute a PAD Information Questionnaire to stakeholders. Stakeholders are encouraged to fill out the questionnaire and provide any existing data they have relevant to the Project to Kleinschmidt and SCE&G for inclusion in the PAD.
- Tonya will provide a list of vendors that use the Project area for recreation and any data she has on special events that occur in the Project area.
- SCE&G will contact local tribes as part of the cultural resource component of relicensing.