

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

Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc.
Joint RCG Meeting

August 22, 2019

Final KMK 9-20-19

ATTENDEES:

Amy Bresnahan (DESC)	Elizabeth Miller (SCDNR)
Bill Argentieri (DESC)	Ron Ahle (SCDNR)
Ray Ammarell (DESC)	Rusty Wenerick (SCDHEC)
Randy Mahan (DESC)	Melanie Olds (USFWS) via conf. call
Caleb Gaston (DESC)	Twyla Cheatwood (NMFS)
Mike Mosley (DESC)	Kathryn Feingold (USACE)
Alison Jakupca (Kleinschmidt)	Stan Simpson (USACE)
Kelly Kirven (Kleinschmidt)	Derrick Miller (USFS)
Henry Mealing (Kleinschmidt)	Elizabeth Toombs (CN) via conf. call
Paula Marcinek (GDNR)	Tonya Bonitatibus (SRK)
Ed Betross (GDNR)	Tony Hicks (individual)
Jeffrey Williams (GDNR)	John Harris (individual)

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 the meeting was to review the draft Pre-Application Document (PAD) and discuss any potential information or study needs. Alison reminded the group that the final PAD is not due until May 2020 at the earliest, so there is plenty of time for revisions if needed. She told the group that at the time of PAD issuance, DESC will also request the use of the Traditional Licensing Process (TLP) to complete relicensing. Alison gave the group a short review of the steps involved in a TLP. Twyla said that if the Project isn't expected to be controversial, NOAA generally supports the use of the TLP.

Operations

Amy gave an update on the flashboard replacements. She said that the replacement of the four-foot flashboards is complete, but they are still working on replacing the five-foot flashboards. She said they plan to be finished by the end of September, but they have received approval from the agencies to keep the reservoir drawn down through October if needed. Amy said that the plant should operate much more efficiently after these upgrades are complete. John Harris asked if it would be possible for the reservoir operating range to be modified so that the minimum reservoir level is higher than the current requirement of 183.0 NGVD. Ray explained that the reservoir fluctuation range is used to accomplish the re-regulation function of the Project. He said that sometimes the entire fluctuation range is necessary to re-regulate the flows released by the upstream Thurmond Dam. However, the new flashboards should help keep the pool elevation more stable. Bill A. said that if they raise the lower level of the range, it pushes the upper level over the top of the

flashboards; tripping the flashboards more frequently and would create a maintenance issue. Resetting the flashboards also requires the reservoir to be lowered. Bill A. asked John if there is a time of the year when he would like to see the reservoir level higher. He said that he would like to see the reservoir higher all year, but especially so in the spring and summer. Ray said they could speak with plant management about what impact this would have on the Project. Alison said that this will be a good point to discuss further in the Operations Resource Conservation Group (RCG). John also asked if there is a correlation between the height of USGS Gage 02195520 Savannah River near Evans, GA and the elevation of USGS Gage 02196483 Savannah River at Stevens Creek Dam near Morgana, SC. DESC will look into this and determine if a correlation exists. If so, they will provide a document showing the comparison. Ron asked that Table 3-2 on page 3-8 be revised to show megawatts converted to cubic feet per second.

Fish Passage

Tonya said that it is very important to her organization that fish passage is addressed in the PAD. Alison assured her that fish passage will be addressed during the relicensing process and discussion of fish passage requirements under the existing license and relicensing consultation needs will be included in the PAD. Twyla stated that sturgeon are not being considered for passage at Stevens Creek.

Tribal

Elizabeth T. asked that Section 4.9.3 (page 4-90) be revised to state that the Cherokee Nation will be consulted anytime the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) are consulted. She also noted that formal consultation only occurs with federally-recognized tribes, such as the Cherokee Nation. State-recognized tribes can participate in the relicensing process as interested parties.

Land Management

Derrick asked if there was a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) for the Project. Alison said that there is not since docks are currently permitted through the USACE and since DESC doesn't own large tracts of land around the reservoir. She said that the Final License Application will summarize DESC's land management practices. Ron said that since there isn't an SMP, it is important from a resource management perspective that Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) are identified and protected. He would like to see ESAs identified during this relicensing and protected from development.

Water Resources

The group discussed water quality in the Project area. Paula noted that there was additional, potentially more up-to-date information available from the EPA via their National Rivers and Streams assessment. Ed suggested collecting data further upstream Stevens Creek to characterize fish habitat in this area (specifically above Woodlawn Road, or the current Site 5 location). He said this is increasingly important considering the implementation of fish passage in the coming years. At a previous meeting, Pace Wilber (NMFS) said there is interest in collecting water quality data in the Project tailrace, such as continuous sampling for temperature and dissolved oxygen. Kleinschmidt will develop a water quality study plan strawman for discussion with the Water Quality RCG. Tonya will send information on the low head dams that exist on Stevens Creek. She also mentioned that a USGS gage around the bridge at Woodlawn Road would be helpful.

Fisheries

The group discussed fisheries in the Project area. A fisheries report completed by Jason Bettinger (SCDNR) became available after the draft PAD was prepared. The PAD will be updated with information from this report. Ed will provide additional fisheries information and Paula will provide updated robust redhorse information. Melanie said she will let us know if any additional information is needed regarding mussels.

Wildlife

Ron mentioned that additional information on ducks and local birds in the area is needed in the PAD. He suggested Phinzy Center as a potential source.

RTE

Alison suggested that DESC/Kleinschmidt develop an RTE whitepaper to identify potential RTE species in the Project area and to help guide ESA discussions. Melanie agreed that this would be helpful. Derrick said that he could get the forest biologist to review the whitepaper and provide comments. Twyla said that sturgeon should not be an issue at Stevens Creek. Tonya said that wood stork and swallow-tailed kite should be considered. Paula suggested creating one table in the PAD that lists all species and identify which are state or federally-protected.

Recreation

Alison said that a recreation study is likely needed at the Project. The group agreed. Derrick gave the group some background on the Mims site and explained that this site does not need to be included in the recreation study because it is no longer supported by USFS. USFS is requesting that DESC remove this site from their current license recreation plan and that no additional time or effort should be invested in this site. Bill A. said that DESC is going to send an email to stakeholders about removing Mims from their current license. There are no plans for a replacement recreation site because the site would be on USFS land and the USFS is unable to financially support additional recreation sites at this time, as it is not in-line with their Sustainable Recreation Strategy. Instead, the USFS will focus on improving the Fury's Ferry site. The group discussed the poor condition of the boat ramp at Betty's Branch. DESC has a MOA with Columbia County that states the county is responsible for maintenance. This will be clarified in the PAD. Georgia DNR stated that they would like to see opportunities for recreational development explored further upstream in Stevens Creek. Kleinschmidt will develop a draft recreation use and needs study plan to discuss with the Recreation RCG. Survey instruments will be developed in consultation with stakeholders. The recreation site inventory will account for ADA/barrier-free amenities. Informal recreation areas will be documented and land ownership will be identified. The recreation study will also include analysis on bank fishing. Tonya suggested looking into how to make the recreation sites part of the Blueway Trail so that they are advertised to the public. Tonya will send information on the Blueway Trail.

Geology/Soils

Tonya asked if sedimentation in the reservoir can be addressed during relicensing. She suggested focusing on the sedimentation issue at Betty's Branch. Henry suggested looking at Google Maps history to see how sediment may have filled in the reservoir. Erosion studies are completed annually around the reservoir by DESC. Bill A asked if they knew where the sediment was coming from. John H noted it was from new neighborhood developments and the lack of county enforcing their sediment control measures.

Action items from the meeting are listed below.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Kleinschmidt will make edits to the PAD as discussed in the meeting.
- Kleinschmidt/DESC will develop the following draft study plans/whitepapers and distribute to stakeholders for review:
 - Water Quality Study
 - Recreation Use and Needs Study
 - Environmentally Sensitive Areas Study
 - RTE Whitepaper
- DESC will look into the possibility of raising the reservoir range minimums.
- DESC/Kleinschmidt will determine if there is a correlation between the two USGS gages, and if so, will provide a document for the stakeholders.
- Kleinschmidt will distribute the Jason Bettinger fisheries report to stakeholders.
- Tonya will provide information on low head dams on Stevens Creek.
- Tonya will provide information on the Blueway Trail.
- Ed will provide fisheries data and Paula will provide Robust Redhorse information.
- Melanie will let the group know if additional information is needed for mussels.