

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

Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc.
Fish Passage Technical Committee Meeting

May 27, 2021

Final JAG 3-4-22

ATTENDEES:

Amy Bresnahan (DESC)	Will Pruitt (Kleinschmidt)
Ray Ammarell (DESC)	Eric Bauer (USFWS)
Paul Vidonic (Dominion)	Jay Payne (GDNR)
Pete Sturke (Dominion)	Paula Marcinek (GDNR)
Alison Jakupca (Kleinschmidt)	Bill Post (SCDNR)
Henry Mealing (Kleinschmidt)	Elizabeth Miller (SCDNR)
Bret Hoffman (Kleinschmidt)	Tonya Bonitatibus (Savannah Riverkeeper)
Jennifer Güt (Kleinschmidt)	John Craun (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 visit the Stevens Creek Hydroelectric Project (Project) to discuss big picture ideas for the fish passage and next steps.

Alison provided a brief recap of the previous meeting held on September 29, 2020. During that meeting, stakeholders discussed the American Eel (eel) data that was collected and provided by Georgia DNR and South Carolina DNR and eel data that was collected as part of the 1993 Stevens Creek Entrainment Study. The data indicated that eels of multiple year classes are passing over Stevens Creek dam and traveling upstream. Fritz from NMFS stated that eels are being considered with the design of the fish passage at Augusta Dam, which is tied into passage at the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam (NSBLD). Bill from SCDNR and Fritz agreed that a site study should be conducted closer to the time of fish passage installation, and that any changes in operations or flow dispersals could affect the proposed location of an eel ladder at the Project. Alison mentioned the development of the Aquatic Habitat White Paper that would incorporate eel data and all other relevant data, and that will be distributed to the Fish Passage TWC for review and comment.

Following the meeting recap, Alison restated that the timing of fish passage at the Project is largely dependent on downstream activities at Augusta Dam and NSBLD and asked if anyone knew of any updates with the two projects. Bill stated that the court's decision that the removal of the NSBLD does not adhere to the 2016 federal Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act is being appealed. Eric inquired if there was any coordination with the operation of the Augusta Dam and the Stevens Creek projects. Alison explained that there is currently no coordination beyond the re-regulation benefits that the Stevens Creek project provides for the downstream project.

Eric asked if consideration had been given to the initial installation of an eel ladder with passage for other fish species considered at a later point. Bill and Henry discussed that a siting study may be needed post-license, prior to eel ladder installation to determine the location of eel aggregation, and that downstream fish passage activities will likely factor in. Paul stated Dominion's goal is to make sure the structure is safe and is in the best location for maximum fish passage. Tonya presented that there is a benefit to building a fish passage within the locks that would also serve a recreational purpose of allowing boaters to access the river both upstream and downstream of the Project. Recreation is popular in the area and is advertised by Columbia County. Henry expressed concerns that this may allow for an adverse opportunity for recreational fisherman to exploit fisheries resources near the fish passage and/or require Dominion employees to act as law enforcement. Pete and Alison stated that the NMFS fish passage prescription is largely dependent on the best-available site-specific fisheries data. Alison and Henry emphasized that this is the beginning of a long process and that no final decisions are being made at this point.

Meeting participants were split into two groups to walk along the top of the Project powerhouse intake area and portions of the dam. Afterwards, Paula inquired about the sediment load that is being deposited by Stevens Creek. Amy stated that is unknown at the moment. She explained that during a large rain event, Stevens Creek discharges a large amount very quickly that is then released via the four-foot flashboards on that side of the dam. This is then typically followed by a substantial release from the Thurmond Dam.

There are no action items from this meeting.