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Agency of Natural Resources

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June 18, 2013

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20426

RE: EXTENSION OF TIME REQUEST TO COMMENT ON PROPOSED STUDY PLAN
TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc.
Wilder Hydroelectric Project – FERC No. 1892-026
Bellows Falls Hydroelectric Project – FERC No. 1855-045
Vernon Hydroelectric Project – FERC No. 1904-073

Dear Secretary Bose:

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (Agency) supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) request for an extension of time, until July 30, 2013, to provide final comments on the Draft Proposed Study Plan (PSP) being developed by TransCanada Hydro Northeast, Inc. (TransCanada) for the Wilder (FERC No. 1892), Bellows Falls (FERC No. 1855), and Vernon (FERC No. 1904) projects.

Background

TransCanada is using the Commission's Integrated Licensing Process (ILP) for the relicensing of the three projects. The ILP schedule requires the filing of final study plan comments on July 15, 2013. TransCanada filed its draft PSP, covering 33 individual studies, on schedule on April 15, 2013.

After filing the draft PSP, TransCanada scheduled a series of meetings to review each of the study plans with the resource agencies and other interested parties. Due to the number of studies and the complexity of the issues being addressed, TransCanada scheduled six full-day meetings between May 13, 2013 and June 7, 2013. For most of the proposed studies, substantial technical comments and recommendations were offered by the Agency and other stakeholders during the meetings. TransCanada acknowledged the need to expand on, clarify, or modify the proposed study plans or agreed to the proposed changes to the proposed study plans based on the comments received from the stakeholder and FERC. As a result, TransCanada has acknowledged

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the need for substantial revision and modifications to the PSP submitted on April 15, 2013, and has indicated it will resubmit a revised PSP.

As noted in the Service's June 13, 2013 filing with the Commission, TransCanada has indicated that it will resubmit its revised PSP by July 8, 2013. The Service has requested a two week extension of time to provide final comments on the PSPs.

Extension of Time Request

The Agency is supporting the Service's request for a two week extension of time to submit our comments on the final PSP for the following reasons:

- The date proposed by TransCanada to file the final PSP will not provide the Agency the time necessary to properly review the volume of new information and provide meaningful comments by the Commission's filing deadline of July 15, 2013. TransCanada has indicated to the Service that it will post the revised study plans as they are modified, but can only commit to having all modified study plans resubmitted by July 8, 2013.
- Providing thoughtful well-structured comments and recommendations on the PSP is important to the Commission's staff review and would help assure that the information that is needed to help inform the license decisions are gathered during the two-year study phase.
- The revised PSP will include, for many of the individual studies, substantial revisions and considerably more details relative to the draft PSP submitted on April 15, 2013. Therefore, on many of the individual study plans, substantial review will be needed. The coordination and collaborative effort used by the Agency to review the 33 studies will be greatly compromised given TransCanada's date of July 8, 2013 for resubmission of all revised study plans.
- The Connecticut River forms the boundary between Vermont and New Hampshire, and all three projects discharge into the waters of both states. Therefore, the two states and federal resource agencies are working collaboratively in the relicensing process to assure that all applicable state and federal concerns are adequately addressed. Adequate time is needed to coordinate the review and comment on the revised PSP.
- A modest delay of two weeks to the study plan review process will not interfere with the execution of the studies proposed in the PSP or ordered by the Commission as most of the studies will not be conducted until 2014 or later.

For the reasons cited above the Agency supports the Service's request for a modest two week extension to file comments on the final PSP. By extending the comment period to July 30, 2013, the Agency will have the time necessary to thoroughly review the revised study plans and provide meaningful comments to the Commission.

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We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Very truly yours,



Brian T. Fitzgerald
Streamflow Protection Coordinator

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