



BILLING CODE 6717-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Project No. 1869-060]

NorthWestern Energy; Notice of Intent to File License Application, Filing of Pre-Application Document (Pad), Commencement of Pre-Filing Process, and Scoping; Waiving Parts of the Pre-Filing Process; Request for Comments on the Pad and Scoping Document, and Identification of Issues and Associated Study Requests

- a. Type of Filing: Notice of Intent to File License Application for a New License and Commencing Pre-filing Process
- b. Project No.: 1869-060
- c. Dated Filed: July 1, 2020
- d. Submitted By: NorthWestern Energy
- e. Name of Project: Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project
- f. Location: On the Clark Fork River in Sanders County in the city of Thompson Falls, Montana. The project includes 103.78 acres of federal lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service.
- g. Filed Pursuant to: 18 CFR Part 5 of the Commission's Regulations
- h. Licensee Contact: Mary Gail Sullivan, Director, Environmental & Lands Permitting & Compliance, NorthWestern Energy 11 East Park Street, Butte, Montana 59701; phone: (406) 497-3382 or (406) 490-1838.
- i. FERC Contact: Michael Tust at (202) 502-6522 or e-mail at michael.tust@ferc.gov.

- j. Cooperating agencies: Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies with jurisdiction and/or special expertise with respect to environmental issues that wish to cooperate in the preparation of the environmental document should follow the instructions for filing such requests described in item o below. Cooperating agencies should note the Commission's policy that agencies that cooperate in the preparation of the environmental document cannot also intervene. *See* 94 FERC ¶ 61,076 (2001).
- k. With this notice, we are initiating informal consultation with: (a) the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or NOAA Fisheries under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and the joint agency regulations thereunder at 50 CFR, Part 402 and (b) the State Historic Preservation Officer, as required by section 106, National Historic Preservation Act, and the implementing regulations of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation at 36 CFR 800.2.
- l. With this notice, we are designating NorthWestern Energy as the Commission's non-federal representatives for carrying out informal consultation, pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- m. NorthWestern Energy filed a Pre-Application Document (PAD; including a proposed process plan and schedule) with the Commission, pursuant to 18 CFR 5.6 of the Commission's regulations.
- n. In addition to publishing the full text of this document in the Federal Register, the Commission provides all interested persons an opportunity to view and/or print the contents via the Internet through the Commission's Home Page (<http://www.ferc.gov>) using the "eLibrary" link. Enter the docket number excluding the last three digits in the docket number field to access the document. At this time, the Commission has suspended access to the Commission's Public Reference Room, due to the proclamation declaring a National Emergency concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), issued by the President on March 13, 2020. For assistance, contact FERC at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or call toll-free, (866) 208-3676 or TYY, (202) 502-8659.

Register online at <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/FERCOOnline.aspx> to be notified via e-mail of new filing and issuances related to this or other pending projects. For assistance, contact FERC Online Support.

- o. With this notice, we are soliciting comments on the PAD and Commission's staff Scoping Document 1 (SD1), as well as study requests.

All comments on the PAD and SD1, and study requests should be sent to the address above in paragraph h. In addition, all comments on the PAD and SD1, study requests, requests for cooperating agency status, and all communications to and from Commission staff related to the merits of the potential application must be filed with the Commission.

The Commission strongly encourages electronic filing. Please file all documents using the Commission's eFiling system at <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/FERCOOnline.aspx>. Commenters can submit brief comments up to 6,000 characters, without prior registration, using the eComment system at <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/QuickComment.aspx>. You must include your name and contact information at the end of your comments. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOOnlineSupport@ferc.gov. In lieu of electronic filing, you may submit a paper copy. Submissions sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be addressed to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. Submissions sent via any other carrier must be addressed to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

All filings with the Commission must bear the appropriate heading: "Comments on Pre-Application Document," "Study Requests," "Comments on Scoping Document 1," "Request for Cooperating Agency Status," or "Communications to and from Commission Staff." Any individual or entity interested in submitting study requests, commenting on the PAD or SD1, and any agency requesting cooperating status must do so by **October 27, 2020**.

- p. Although our current intent is to prepare an environmental assessment (EA), there is the possibility that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be required. Nevertheless, this scoping document will satisfy the NEPA scoping requirements, irrespective of whether an EA or EIS is issued by the Commission.

Scoping Meetings and Environmental Site Review

Due to the proclamation declaring a National Emergency concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), issued by the President on March 13, 2020, we are waiving section 5.8(b)(viii) of the Commission's regulations and do not intend to conduct a public scoping meeting or site visit in this case. Instead, we are soliciting written comments, recommendations, and information, on the SD1. Any individual or entity

interested in submitting scoping comments must do so by the date specified in item o. SD1, which outlines the subject areas to be addressed in the environmental document, was mailed to the individuals and entities on the Commission's mailing list. Copies of SD1 may be viewed on the web at <http://www.ferc.gov>, using the "eLibrary" link. Follow the directions for accessing information in paragraph n. Based on all written comments, a Scoping Document 2 (SD2) may be issued. SD2 may include a revised process plan and schedule, as well as a list of issues, identified through the scoping process.

We may conduct the site visit, if needed, later in the process. Further revisions to the schedule may be made as appropriate.

Dated: August 28, 2020.

Kimberly D. Bose,

Secretary.

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