



Proposed Angoon Hydroelectric Project

Issue

The City of Angoon is located within Admiralty Island National Monument and has some of the highest electric rates in Alaska due to the use of diesel generated power. Kootznoowoo, Inc., the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act corporation for the city of Angoon, proposes to develop a hydroelectric facility on Thayer Creek to replace the use of diesel generators. Thayer Creek drains from Thayer Lake and is within the national monument and Kootznoowoo Wilderness. The Forest Service completed a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) in February 2009 to disclose the effects of the proposed project. A record of decision was released in May.

Background

Kootznoowoo, Inc. has the right to develop the hydropower project

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Section 506(a)3(B) granted Kootznoowoo, Inc., the right to develop hydroelectric resources on Admiralty Island at Thayer Creek, subject to such conditions as the Secretary of Agriculture shall prescribe for the protection of water, fishery, wildlife, recreational and scenic values of Admiralty Island.

FERC lacks jurisdiction

In January 2001, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued an order finding that FERC lacked jurisdiction to issue a license for the Angoon Hydroelectric Project. Even though the project is not required to be licensed by FERC, Forest Service guidelines for implementing a hydropower project in wilderness still apply. The Forest Service would authorize the Angoon Hydroelectric Project through issuance of a special use authorization.

Forest Service completed NEPA on project

In 2003 Kootznoowoo, Inc., requested that the Forest Service begin the NEPA work for the Angoon Hydroelectric Project, and requested Forest Service authorization for the project. In August 2004, the regional forester delegated the authority to sign the record of decision and special use authorization to the forest supervisor of the Tongass National Forest. On May 8, 2009, the forest supervisor signed the ROD for the project. He selected Alternative 3 from the Final FEIS, which requires a buried transmission line and other terms and conditions to provide protection to resources in the project area.

Key Aspects of Project

Kootznoowoo, Inc.'s proposed project is for a run of river, 1,000-kilowatt hydroelectric facility. The project area includes the lower 8,500 feet of Thayer Creek and the area between Thayer Creek and the City of Angoon, located approximately six miles to the south. In addition, the project includes an underwater transmission line crossing of Kootznoowoo Inlet. All project facilities, except the underwater transmission line crossing and related facilities in Kootznoowoo Inlet, and the terminus in Angoon, would be located on National Forest System lands.

Project facilities would include:

- a 10-foot high diversion dam on Thayer Creek
- a 10- to 20-acre impoundment above the diversion dam
- a 1.2 mile, 42-inch diameter pipeline from the intake structure to the powerhouse
- a 510-foot long, 36-inch diameter penstock
- a 30' x 68' x 25' powerhouse with two generating units.
- a 2.1-mile access road from the powerhouse to the diversion dam

- a 1.4-mile road from near the powerhouse to the diversion dam/intake structure
- a 2.2-mile, 12.5 kV transmission line segment
- a 2.2-mile access/maintenance road paralleling the transmission
- a 0.5-mile submarine cable from the northern shore of Kootznahoo Inlet to Angoon
- two switch yards where the submarine cable enters and exits Kootznahoo Inlet

Decision

The alternative selected in the ROD requires many general and specific terms and conditions including the following:

- All transmission lines will be buried. Exceptions due to difficulties related to terrain may be authorized on a site-specific basis.
- A minimum instream flow of 40 cubic feet per second be maintained at all times in the Thayer Creek bypass reach.
- All water not needed for power generation be returned to Thayer Creek at the diversion dam and sent through the bypass reach.
- The tailrace discharge will be returned above or immediately below the lowest anadromous fish barrier on Thayer Creek.
- The road from the marine facilities to the powerhouse be routed to minimize effects to karst, streams, and steep slopes along Thayer Creek.
- The term for the special use authorization will be 30 years. The expected timeline for Kootznoowoo, Inc. to design and construct the project is 3 years or longer.

Issues

Alternative driving issues were not identified in scoping. However, there were scoping comments on visual resources, changes to roadless character, changes to wilderness character, and general resource protection. Additional concerns related to water quality, power line locations, fisheries, wetlands, and social/economics and were addressed in the FEIS.

Current Situation

The appeal period for the record of decision ended July 7, 2009. No appeals were filed. Before project construction may begin, Kootznoowoo, Inc. must obtain all necessary federal and state permits, including the Forest Service's special use authorization. This includes submitting to the Forest Service design plans, site plans, and specifications as necessary to assure consistency and compliance with the ROD. Kootznoowoo, Angoon Community Association and Inside Passage Electric Co-op are working together to seek funding for the project.

More Information

District Ranger, Admiralty Island National Monument, Tongass National Forest, (907) 789-6202, or Jennifer Berger, Special Uses Administrator, (907) 789-6278, Admiralty National Monument, Tongass National Forest, and Alaska Region.