



# Soule River Hydropower Project Proposal

## Background

Alaska Power & Telephone Company (AP&T) started studying the feasibility of a large hydropower project on the Soule River in an area designated for Remote Recreation by the 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan. The purpose of the project is to generate renewable energy for sale on the North American Grid, specifically providing power to the lower 48 states through Canada's transmission lines. In July 2009, AP&T joined with other business entities to become Soule Hydro LLC. Soule Hydro LLC expressed interest in preparing a Final License Application for submission to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in the next three years.



## Issue

- The proposal is inconsistent with the 2008 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) management prescriptions for the Remote Recreation Land Use Designation (LUD).
- The applicant has expressed interest in changing the Forest Plan to accommodate the project. The decision whether or not to amend the Forest Plan will set precedent for how the Forest will proceed with processing multiple requests for commercial, private development of energy, both hydro and geothermal in restrictive non-development LUDs.
- The project falls within an Inventoried Roadless Area; permission to build roads and cut trees would need to be sought from the Secretary of Agriculture.

## Current Situation

The Secretary of Agriculture (Forest Service) has authority under Section 4(e) of the Federal Power Act to require Terms and Conditions in the License Order issued by FERC. These Conditions must provide for the "protection and utilization of the reservation" and must be compatible with the Forest Plan. Developing "reasonable" 4(e) conditions that are compatible with Remote Recreation would be difficult. The Forest Service does not issue a decision for authorizing the project itself, but does make a decision to issue a Special Use Authorization for occupancy of National Forest System lands. The decision to authorize construction of the project or not is made by FERC in a License Order. This is supported by NEPA analysis conducted by FERC.

The proposed project includes:

- A concrete dam with a maximum height of 160 feet, 950-acre reservoir, a 12-foot diameter, 12,000-foot-long tunnel, two-mile road with a bridge crossing, and a landing dock onshore
- A powerhouse with two generating units, with 75 megawatts total capacity
- A 9.7 mile-long submarine cable transmission line connecting to Canada/

In the 2008 Amendment of the Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan, the Soule River drainage LUD was reconfirmed to be Remote Recreation. Management Direction for Remote Recreation areas includes no road building (except for mineral entry), high scenic integrity objective, and maintaining natural watershed characteristics. Natural barriers in the river result in less than 1 mile of anadromous habitat, however the glacial silt from the river has resulted in an extensive and unique sandy delta, used by salmon fry for rearing.

Policy and procedure for responding to this project proposal is a key part of balancing the nations energy demands with the land allocations for the Tongass National Forest.

### More Information

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