



Soule River Hydroelectric Project

Issue

Beginning in 2005 Alaska Power & Telephone Company (AP&T) proposed to construct a 77MW hydropower project on the Soule River, about seventy-five miles northeast of Ketchikan, Alaska

Background

- The project, as proposed, was not consistent with the 2008 Forest Plan management prescriptions for the Remote Recreation Land Use Designation. On April 28, 2011, the Forest Service notified AP&T that there were no plans to amend the Forest Plan for this project. The Alaska Region submitted 4(e) terms and conditions based on the 2008 Forest Plan direction.
- The proposed project included the removal of timber and the construction of 3.1 miles of road within the Hyder Inventoried Roadless Area (#530).
- Project features included a dam 265-feet in height, an adjacent saddle dam about 2,074-feet in length, a 1,072-acre reservoir, a 11,400-foot-long power tunnel, 3.1 miles of road with three bridges, powerhouse, and marine access facilities, and 9.7 miles of submarine cable transmission line connecting to Canada.
- AP&T planned to transmit the power through Canada to the Lower 48 states and/or market the power in British Columbia. There were no power sales agreements or marketing plans in effect. There was no proposed sale of power within Alaska.
- AP&T submitted a Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment and Draft License Application to the Federal Regulatory Energy Authority (FERC) in early 2011. The Forest Service filed comments and preliminary Federal Power Act 4(e) terms and conditions with FERC in May 2011.
- On March 15, 2013, AP&T applied for a Presidential Permit from the Department of Energy. This permit is required for the export of power and the construction of transmission lines across the U.S. international border. On February 11, 2014, the Department of Energy asked to participate as a cooperating agency with FERC on the National Environmental Policy Act analysis for the Project.
- On March 2, 2015, the Tongass Forest Supervisor notified AP&T that the Forest Service was in the process of amending the Forest Plan. Proposed changes to the Forest Plan were included to make the development of renewable energy resources more permissible in order to stimulate economic development in Southeast Alaska communities.
- On May 2, 2016, AP&T applied to FERC for a third preliminary permit to continue studying the feasibility of the project. On July 11, 2016, FERC issued an order denying the third preliminary permit. Commission staff found that it would not be prudent to issue any preliminary permits for the site until the Forest Service amended its land management plan.
- The Forest Plan was approved on December 9, 2016.
- In February 2017 AP&T notified the Forest Service that they no longer wished to pursue the project, and would not be seeking renewal of their hydroelectric investigation special use permit.
- September 29, 2017, AP&T notified the Forest Service that all authorized improvements on National Forest System lands had been removed.

More Information

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