

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20426
August 28, 2020

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 1869-060 – Montana
Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project
NorthWestern Energy

**Subject: Scoping Document 1 for the Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project,
P-1869-060**

To the Parties Addressed:

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) is currently reviewing the Pre-Application Document (PAD) submitted by NorthWestern Energy, for relicensing the Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 1869). The project is located 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.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, Commission staff intends to prepare an environmental assessment (EA), which will be used by the Commission to determine whether, and under what conditions, to issue a new license for the project. To support and assist our environmental review, we are beginning the public scoping process to ensure that all pertinent issues are identified and analyzed, and that the EA is thorough and balanced. Although our current intent is to prepare an EA, there is a possibility that an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be required. The Commission's scoping process will satisfy the NEPA scoping requirements, irrespective of whether the Commission issues an EA or an EIS.

We invite your participation in the scoping process and are circulating the attached Scoping Document 1 (SD1) to provide you with information on the project. We are also soliciting your comments and suggestions on our preliminary list of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EA. We are also requesting that you identify any studies that would help provide a framework for collecting pertinent information on the resource areas under consideration necessary for the Commission to prepare the EA for the project.

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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 and site visit in this case. Instead, we are soliciting written comments, recommendations, and information, on the SD1. If needed and possible, a site visit may be held later in the study plan development and review process.

SD1 is being distributed to both NorthWestern Energy's distribution list and the Commission's official mailing list (see section 10.0 of the attached SD1). If you wish to be added to or removed from the Commission's official mailing list, please send your request by email to FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov. In lieu of an email request, you may submit a paper request. 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 written or emailed requests must specify your wish to be removed from or added to the mailing list and must clearly identify the following on the first page: **Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project No. 1869-060**.

Please review SD1 and, if you wish to provide comments, follow the instructions in section 6.0, *Request for Information and Studies*. If you have any questions about SD1, the scoping process, or how Commission staff will develop the EA for this project, please contact Mike Tust at (202) 502-6522 or michael.tust@ferc.gov. Additional information about the Commission's licensing process and the Thompson Falls Project may be obtained from our website, www.ferc.gov, or NorthWestern Energy's licensing website, <http://www.northwesternenergy.com/environment/thompson-falls-project/thompson-falls-relicensing>. The deadline for filing comments is **October 27, 2020**. The Commission strongly encourages electronic filings.

Enclosure: Scoping Document 1

SCOPING DOCUMENT 1
THOMPSON FALLS HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

MONTANA

PROJECT NO. 1869-060

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Office of Energy Projects
Division of Hydropower Licensing
Washington, DC

August 2020

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SCOPING DOCUMENT 1

Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project, No. 1869-060

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission or FERC), under the authority of the Federal Power Act (FPA),¹ may issue licenses for terms ranging from 30 to 50 years for the construction, operation, and maintenance of non-federal hydroelectric projects. On July 1, 2020, NorthWestern Energy filed a Notice of Intent and a Pre-Application Document (PAD) for a new license for the Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 1869-060 (Thompson Falls Project or project).²

The Thompson Falls Project is located on the Clark Fork River in Sanders County in the city of Thompson Falls, Montana (figure 1). A detailed description of the project is provided in section 3.0. The Thompson Falls Project includes 103.78 acres of federal lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service). The project has a total installed capacity of 92.6 megawatts (MW). The average annual generation of the Thompson Falls Project from 2014 to 2018 was 504,300 megawatt-hours (MWh).

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969,³ the Commission's regulations, and other applicable laws require that we independently evaluate the environmental effects of re-licensing the Thompson Falls Project as proposed and consider reasonable alternatives to the licensee's proposed action. Currently, we intend to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for the Thompson Falls Project that describes and evaluates the probable effects, including an assessment of the site-specific and cumulative effects, if any, of the licensee's proposed action and alternatives.

¹ 16 U.S.C. § 791(a)-825(r) (2018).

² The current license for the Thompson Falls Project was issued with an effective date of January 1, 1976, for a term of 40 years. A major license amendment was issued April 30, 1990, approving the construction of a new powerhouse and extending the license term to 50 years. The current license expires on December 31, 2025.

³ National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4370(f) (2012).

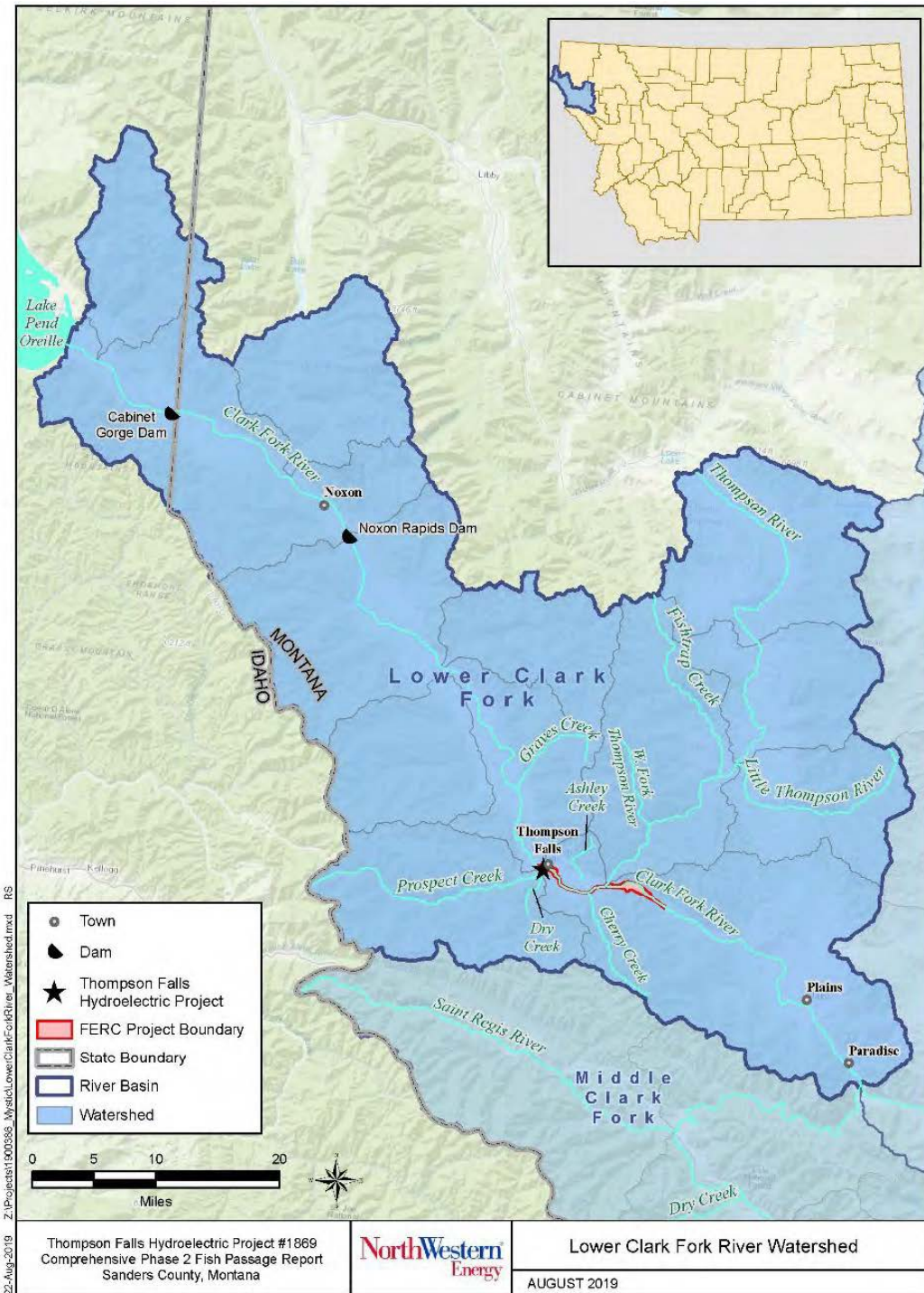


Figure 1: Location of the Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project (source: Comprehensive Phase 2 Final Fish Passage Report filed December 23, 2019)

Although our current intent is to prepare an EA, there is a possibility that an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be required. The Commission's scoping process will satisfy the NEPA scoping requirements, irrespective of whether the Commission issues an EA or an EIS.

2.0 SCOPING

This Scoping Document 1 (SD1) is intended to advise all participants as to the proposed scope of the EA and to seek additional information pertinent to this analysis. This document contains: (1) a description of the scoping process and schedule for the development of the EA; (2) a description of the licensee's proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action; (3) a preliminary identification of environmental issues; (4) a proposed EA outline; and (5) a preliminary list of comprehensive plans that are applicable to the project.

2.1 PURPOSES OF SCOPING

Scoping is the process used to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities for enhancement or mitigation associated with a proposed action. In general, scoping should be conducted early in the planning stage of the project. The purposes of the scoping process are as follows:

- invite participation of federal, state and local resource agencies, Native-American tribes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the public to identify significant environmental and socioeconomic issues related to the proposed project;
- determine the resource issues, depth of analysis, and significance of issues to be addressed in the EA;
- identify how the project would or would not contribute to cumulative effects in the project area;
- identify reasonable alternatives to the proposed action that should be evaluated in the EA;
- solicit, from participants, available information on the resources at issue, including existing information and study needs; and

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- determine the resource areas and potential issues that do not require detailed analysis during review of the project.

2.2 SCOPING COMMENTS

During preparation of the EA, there will be several opportunities for the resource agencies, Native-American tribes, NGOs, and the public to provide input. These opportunities occur:

- during the public scoping process (no scoping meetings will be held) and study plan meetings, when we solicit comments regarding the scope of issues and analysis for the EA;
- in response to the Commission's notice that the project is ready for environmental analysis; and
- after issuance of the EA when we solicit written comments on the EA.

At this time, we do not anticipate holding public or agency scoping meetings. Instead we are soliciting your written comments and suggestions on the preliminary list of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EA, as described in SD1. We invite all interested agencies, Native-American tribes, NGOs, and individuals to file written comments to assist us in identifying the scope of environmental issues that should be analyzed in the EA. All written comments will become part of the Commission's public record. See Section 6.0 below for instructions on filing written comments and information with the Commission.

Copies of the PAD may be viewed on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov), using the "eLibrary" link. Enter the docket number, P-1869, to access the document. For assistance, contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659.

Following the scoping comment period, all issues raised will be reviewed and decisions made as to the level of analysis needed. If preliminary analysis indicates that any issues presented in this scoping document have little potential for causing significant effects, the issue(s) will be identified and the reasons for not providing a more detailed analysis will be given in the EA.

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If we receive no substantive comments on SD1, then we will not prepare a Scoping Document 2 (SD2). Otherwise, we will issue SD2 to address any substantive comments received. The SD2 will be issued for informational purposes only; no response will be required. The EA will address recommendations and input received during the scoping process.

3.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with NEPA, the environmental analysis will consider the following alternatives, at a minimum: (1) the no-action alternative, (2) the applicant's proposed action, and (3) alternatives to the proposed action.

3.1 NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the no-action alternative, the Thompson Falls Project would continue to operate as required by the current project license (i.e., there would be no change to the existing environment). No new environmental protection, mitigation, or enhancement measures would be implemented. We use this alternative to establish baseline environmental conditions for comparison with other alternatives.

3.1.1 Existing Project Facilities

The Thompson Falls Project consists of a 1,446-acre, 12-mile-long reservoir that is impounded by two dams and serving two powerhouses as described below.

The first dam (i.e., main channel dam) is located the furthest upstream from the intake and powerhouses and consists of a 1,016-foot-long, 54-foot-high, concrete gravity dam with a 913-foot-long overflow section with removable 8-foot-high fixed wheel panels atop 8-foot-high stoplogs and four radial gates. The second dam (i.e., dry channel dam) is located downstream from the main channel dam and consists of a 449-foot-long, 45-foot-high concrete gravity dam containing a 289-foot-long overflow section with 8-foot-high fixed wheel panels atop 4-foot-high stoplogs. The dry channel dam is separated from the main channel by an island. Water discharged through the powerhouses joins the Clark Fork River approximately 3,500 feet downstream of the main channel dam, creating an approximate 3,500-foot-long bypassed reach in the Clark Fork River. Figure 2 displays the locations of major project features for the Thompson Falls Project.



Figure 2: Major Project Features for the Thompson Falls Project (Source: PAD; staff)

Just downstream of the dry channel dam, flows enter two separate powerhouse intake channels. The first consists of a 300-foot-long, 78-foot-wide excavated channel leading to a 200-foot long, 78-foot-wide reinforced concrete intake. The intake is comprised of three rectangular conduits that are 39 feet high, 18 feet wide, and 75 feet long that lead into the 200-foot-long, 78-foot-wide concrete powerhouse constructed in 1995 (hereafter the newer 1995 powerhouse). The conduits slope directly to a concrete semi-spiral scroll case that directs water to a Kaplan-type turbine generator unit rated at 52.06 megawatts (MW). The intake also includes a 10-foot-wide, 145-foot-long sluiceway on the left side (when looking downstream) for diverting trash around the powerhouse. Flows exit the powerhouse and enter a 1,000-foot-long, 100-foot-wide tailrace channel before re-entering the Clark Fork River. Generation from the 1995 powerhouse is stepped up from 13.6 kilovolts (kV) to 115 kV via a transformer located adjacent to the powerhouse and is transmitted via an approximately 300-foot-long, 115-kV overhead project transmission line to an interconnection point at the original powerhouse which then connects to NorthWestern Energy's regional transmission line system.⁴

⁴ According to preliminary staff analysis, the interconnection point appears to be at or

Flows from the reservoir can also enter an adjacent 450-foot-long, 80-foot-wide excavated forebay channel leading to a 258-foot-long, 40-foot-high concrete gravity intake structure with six steel 14-foot-diameter main turbine penstocks, two 6-foot-8-inch-diameter exciter turbine penstocks, and their associated intake gates and trash racks. Flow enters a 292-foot-long, 97-foot-wide, steel frame and masonry original powerhouse containing six Francis-type turbine-generating units, five rated at 7.0 MW each and one rated at 6.0 MW. Flows leaving the original powerhouse enter an approximately 800-foot-long, 130-foot-wide tailrace channel that feeds into the Clark Fork River. Generation from the original powerhouse is stepped up from 6.6 kV to 115 kV via two transformers in a switchyard housed in the powerhouse and is transmitted via a 50-foot-long, 115- kV project transmission line to interconnect with NorthWestern Energy's regional transmission line system.

NorthWestern Energy accesses the powerhouses via a 1,000-foot-long project road located on the west end of the reservoir. The road divides with one end going a short distance to a 135-foot-long bridge across the original powerhouse's intake canal and leading to the 1995 powerhouse while the other end of the road continues on to the original powerhouse.

An upstream fish passage facility is located on the main channel dam (Figure 2). The ladder consists of 48 step pools and fish sampling facilities. The sampling facilities consist of a holding pool with a fish collecting mechanism, fish crowder, fish lock, sampling facilities shelter, several sampling and handling tables, and water supply pipelines. NorthWestern Energy also maintains Island Park as a requirement of its existing license, but it also voluntarily maintains the following recreation facilities located within or adjacent to the project boundary: Southshore Dispersed Recreation Area, Wild Goose Landing Park, Power Park, Powerhouse Loop Trail and Sandy Beach, and the Northshore Boat Restraint.

Island Park is located between the main channel dam and dry channel dam on an island within the reservoir. Facilities on the island include a network of trails with informative signs, picnic tables, benches, and an ADA-compliant restroom. A viewing platform is located on the eastern edge of the island overlooking the main channel dam and the fish passage facility. Pedestrian access to the island is from the north shore of the reservoir via the Gallatin Street Bridge and contains a 17-car parking area maintained by

adjacent to the original powerhouse where power from both powerhouses connect to the regional grid.

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NorthWestern Energy. Access from the south shore is provided by the Historic High Bridge which is operated and maintained by Sanders County.

Southshore Dispersed Recreation Area is located on the south shore of the river and includes a day use area for picnicking.

Wild Goose Landing Park is located on the north shore of the Thompson Falls reservoir. The eastern portion of the park is on land owned by NorthWestern Energy and the western portion is on property owned by the city of Thompson Falls. Facilities include a community park with a boat launch and dock, a swimming dock, toilets, informational signs, parking, picnic facilities, and provides shoreline fishing opportunities. Designated parking adjacent to the restroom facility accommodates 10 vehicles, including one ADA-designated parking space, while about 10 more vehicles may park in dispersed areas along the access road adjacent to the boat launch. NorthWestern Energy's existing license required construction of the boat launch and dock. The park is managed by the city of Thompson Falls under a management agreement with NorthWestern Energy. In addition, NorthWestern Energy voluntarily provides funding for operation and maintenance of the park.

Power Park is located along the north shoreline of the reservoir just above the original powerhouse. Facilities include a group pavilion, restrooms, picnic tables, benches, parking for 10 vehicles, and an information kiosk.

Powerhouse Loop Trail and Sandy Beach is a 2.3-mile-long loop trail downstream of the Thompson Falls powerhouses with a vault toilet located near the trailhead and benches placed at various locations along the trail. The trail runs through project land, property within the boundary of the FERC-licensed Clark Fork River Hydroelectric Project No. 2058, Highway 200 right-of-way, and private land and is voluntarily maintained through a partnership with NorthWestern Energy and owners of the land through which the trail runs. Sandy Beach, which accommodates a small number of people at a time, is accessible through a connecting trail that leads from the loop trail to the shoreline and is also voluntarily operated and maintained by NorthWestern Energy.

North Shore Boat Restraint is located on the north shore of Thompson Falls reservoir on land owned and operated by NorthWestern Energy. It includes anchors for docking boats and an undeveloped shoreline with a bench and a grassy area for viewing the reservoir and project facilities. NorthWestern Energy voluntarily operates and maintains these facilities.

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In addition to the facilities described above, the project boundary partially includes the following recreational facilities which are not operated or maintained by NorthWestern Energy: Historic High Bridge located within Sanders County easement on NorthWestern property and managed by Sanders County; Cherry Creek Boat Launch owned and managed by Sanders County, and the North Shore Dispersed Use Area (including former sawmill site) which is a popular fishing site and includes a mix of ownership and easements by Montana Department of Transportation and private entities (i.e., BNSF Railway, former sawmill operators, and NorthWestern Energy). Figure 2 provides the locations of all recreational facilities located within or adjacent to the project boundary.

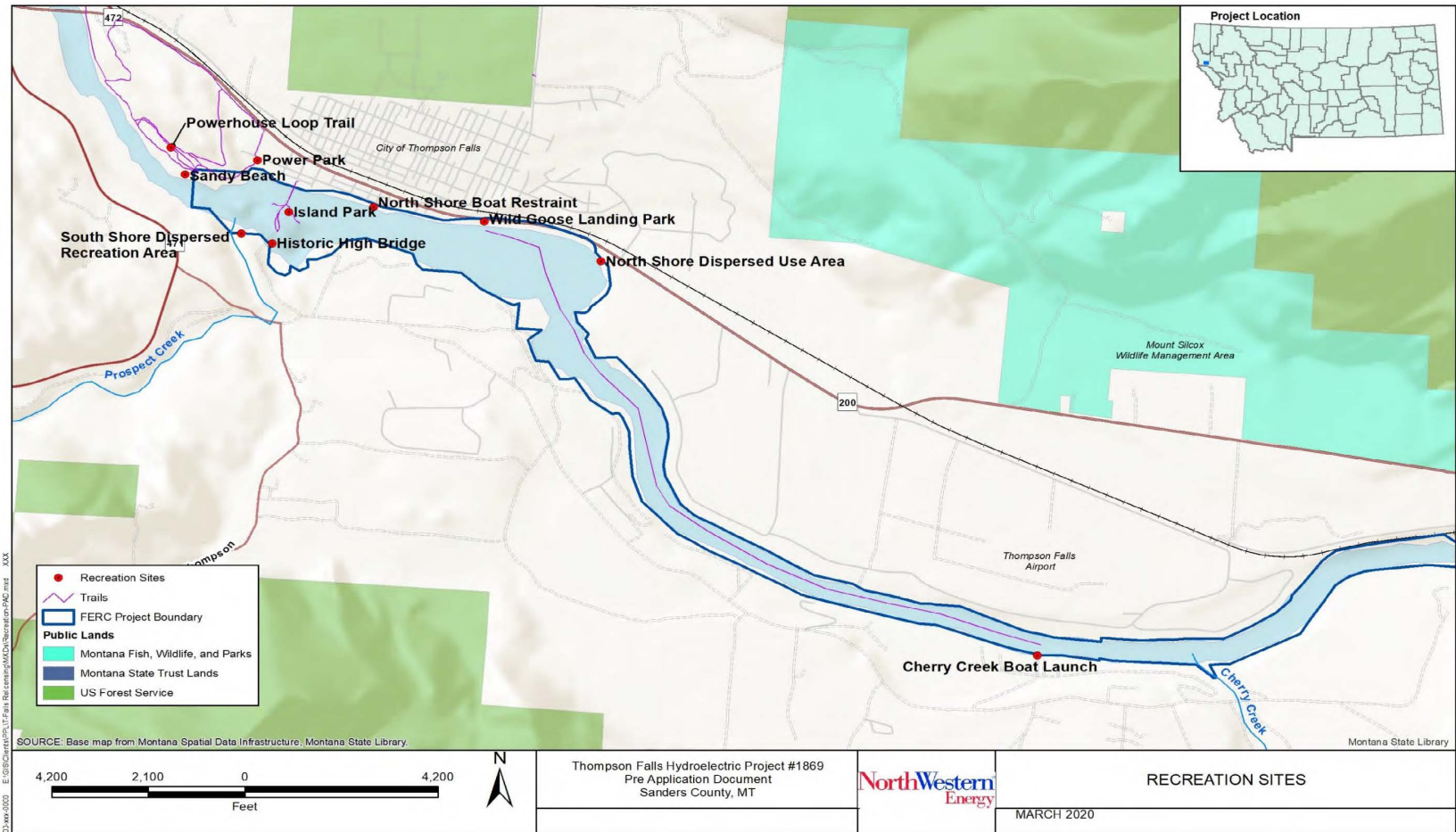


Figure 3: Map of Project-Related Public Recreation Areas (source: PAD)

3.1.2 Existing Project Operation

NorthWestern Energy is currently authorized to operate as a peaking facility and provides both baseload and flexible generation within the constraints of its existing license. NorthWestern Energy operates to maintain the reservoir elevation within a four-foot operating band (i.e., between 2396.5 feet and 2392.5 feet elevation) while also maintaining a minimum flow of 6,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) or inflow, whichever is less, in the Clark Fork River downstream of the project to protect and enhance aquatic resources. NorthWestern Energy states it can discharge its total 15,764 acre-feet of storage in slightly less than eight hours but that it has rarely utilized the full 4-foot daily fluctuation. Instead, it typically operates to maximize peak generation across all units with available flows while maintaining the reservoir at the full operating level (i.e., 2396.5 feet elevation). As flows allow, NorthWestern Energy typically operates Unit No. 7 in the newer powerhouse first followed by Units 1 and 3 and then Units No. 2, 4, 5, 6 in the original powerhouse.⁵ The project has generated an average of 504,300 megawatt-hours of energy a year between 2014 and 2018.

When inflow is at or less than the hydraulic capacity of the project (i.e., 23,252 cfs or less), all flow is routed through the powerhouses except for flows required to operate the upstream fish passage facility (i.e., 3 cfs to operate the workstation/holding area, 6 cfs to pass through the ladder step pools and 20-125 cfs for attraction flows). When flow exceeds 23,252 cfs, the radial gates at the main channel dam are opened to pass additional flow and maintain the reservoir elevation. As flows continue to increase, the spillway panels on the main channel dam are removed to provide additional spill capacity. If flows exceed 70,000 cfs, the dry channel spillway panels are used to further increase spill capacity. NorthWestern Energy states the dry channel spillway has been used in 5 of the past 10 years (2010 to 2019). Prior to the installation of the two new radial gates on the main channel dam (which became operational in 2019), flow exceeded the radial gate capacity at the main channel dam for approximately three months in an average year. NorthWestern Energy states that the new radial gates provide a discharge capacity of 20,000 cfs (10,000 cfs each) which will add substantial reservoir operational control to pass high flows and reduce the need to manually remove spill panels, resulting in less frequent deep drawdowns of the reservoir moving forward.

⁵ Unit 7 is a vertical shaft, double-regulated Kaplan-type turbine located in the 1995 powerhouse with an installed capacity of 52.6 MW and a maximum hydraulic capacity of 12,320 cfs. Units 1 through 6 are vertical Francis-type turbine units located in the original powerhouse with installed capacities ranging from 6.3 MW to 7.0 MW and maximum hydraulic capacities ranging from 1,800 cfs to 1,833 cfs.

Fish Passage Facility

The upstream fish passage facility is located on the right side (facing downstream) of the main channel dam and is typically operated from mid-March to mid-October to pass target species (i.e., bull trout, other native species, and certain non-native salmonid sport fish) upstream of the dam although the operational season depends on weather conditions. NorthWestern Energy states that air temperatures must be above freezing to allow for the equipment to operate properly and that the facility is typically shut down and dewatered when a fall weather freeze is imminent. Temporary closures of the passage facility may also occur due to high flows in the spring months when debris and sediment accumulate in the lower pools⁶ or when the reservoir is drawn down for maintenance.⁷

The fish ladder entrance includes two entrance ports through which fish can enter the ladder entrance pool: (1) a gated 24-inch-wide and 36-inch-high low-tailwater entrance designed to operate during non-spill periods; and (2) a gated 30 inch-wide and 48-inch-high entrance designed to operate when the dam is spilling. Fish that enter the ladder ascend up the ladder pools (each 6-foot-long by 5-foot-wide by 4-foot-deep) and eventually reach a holding pool at the top of the ladder where they are collected and sorted at the work station and target species are released in the reservoir upstream of the dam.⁸ The ladder is designed to induce a 1-foot-drop for each of the 48 pools to allow

⁶ NorthWestern Energy's fish ladder is designed to pass fish with flows up to 48,000 cfs. Operation of the ladder generally stops when flows exceed 60,000 cfs.

⁷ NorthWestern Energy states that the ladder section of the upstream fish passage facility loses functionality when the reservoir elevation is more than 1.0 foot below normal full operating level. During deep drawdowns, the upstream fish passage facility is dewatered and shutdown until the reservoir returns to the normal full operating level.

⁸ The ladder includes a trap-sample loop in the upper ladder which allows fish to be routed to the off-ladder holding pool. Fish can then be locked into a sampling area for data collection. The ladder can be configured to either route fish into the sampling loop or opened to allow volitional passage into the project reservoir. NorthWestern Energy states that since 2011, all fish ascending the ladder have been routed to the sampling loop and processed at the workstation. Fish are sorted at the workstation and most of the fish are released upstream except for certain non-target species such as walleye, lake trout,

passage of a diverse population of fish. Each step pool is separated by an aluminum weir plate with a sliding weir gate leaf. The weir plate has a square orifice (1.0-foot-high by 1.17-foot wide) at the bottom center of the plate and a 2-foot-wide weir notch cut into the top of the plate. Fish can pass between pools either through the bottom orifice (orifice mode) or through the top weir (notch mode) depending on if the sliding weir gate is raised or lowered. NorthWestern Energy has stated that the most effective ladder operating mode to date for the passage of native fish has been orifice mode as notch mode appears to inhibit upstream passage of certain native non-salmonids such as largescale sucker and northern pikeminnow.⁹

When the reservoir is at the normal operating level, 9 cfs flows through the facility (3 cfs through the workstation/holding area near the top of the ladder and 6 cfs through the step pools). Additional attraction flows can be provided via a high velocity jet (20 cfs) and auxiliary water system (up to 54 cfs) that have intakes located lower on the dam. In addition to these operating and attraction flows, one spill panel on the main channel dam located near the upstream fish passage facility may be partially opened to provide an additional flow of approximately 100 to 125 cfs if needed.

The project does not include a downstream fish passage facility. When water is spilling over the dam, fish can migrate downstream via the spillway, outlet works or through the turbines. During non-spill periods, the primary means of downstream passage is through the turbines.

brook trout (including brook trout/bull trout hybrids), and smallmouth bass.

⁹ See page 62 of NorthWestern Energy's Baseline Environmental Document for the Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project dated November 1, 2018 available at http://www.northwesternenergy.com/docs/default-source/thompson-falls/thompson-falls-other-reference-material/thompson_falls_baseline_environmental_document_11012018.pdf. Accessed August 8, 2020.

3.2 APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

3.2.1 Proposed Project Facilities and Operation

NorthWestern Energy does not propose any new construction or modifications to its existing facilities.¹⁰ In terms of operations, NorthWestern Energy proposes to operate within a narrower elevation band (i.e., between 2396.5 feet and 2394.0 feet elevation) which would reduce potential daily reservoir fluctuations to 2.5 feet below normal full operating level compared to the 4-foot fluctuation currently authorized.

In addition, NorthWestern is in the process of refining the operation of the spillway on the main channel dam using the new radial gates that were installed in 2019. NorthWestern Energy states the new radial gates will be used for reservoir regulation and flow restoration in case of plant trips and can be used to maintain the reservoir elevation in times of decreased generation. NorthWestern expects to further refine its spillway radial gate opening sequence during the relicensing process.

3.2.2 Proposed Environmental Measures

NorthWestern Energy proposes to continue to operate the Thompson Falls Project with the protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) measures described below.

Aquatic Resources

- Continue to maintain a minimum flow of 6,000 cfs or inflow, if less, in the Clark Fork River downstream of the powerhouses.
- Continue to monitor total dissolved gas (TDG) levels during high flow periods to assess the potential impact of the new radial gates on TDG levels in the Clark Fork River downstream of the main channel dam.
- Continue to operate the upstream fish passage facility from mid-March through mid-October and continue to evaluate, assess, and optimize upstream fish passage for Bull Trout, native salmonids, and nonnative sport

¹⁰ Because NorthWestern Energy does not explicitly say so, it is unclear from the information presented in the PAD whether NorthWestern Energy intends to continue to maintain its Island Park recreation facility or any of the other recreation areas discussed in the PAD.

fish in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee members.¹¹

Terrestrial Resources

- Continue annual noxious weed control measures in high-use areas on project lands.
- Design and implement shoreline stabilization projects around Thompson Falls Reservoir using a bioengineering approach that propagates native vegetation from cuttings, bareroot, and potted plantings.
- Continue to refine operation of the new radial gates on the main channel dam to increase spill capacity and reduce the frequency of emergency reservoir drawdowns that can result in dewatering of riparian, wetland, and littoral habitats in Thompson Falls Reservoir.

Recreation

- Continue to implement NorthWestern Energy's *Standards for the Design, Construction, Maintenance, and Operation of Shoreline Facilities on NorthWestern Energy Hydroelectric Projects* to ensure that shoreline facilities located at the project are constructed, operated, and maintained in a safe, effective, and environmentally-friendly manner that protects and/or enhances adjacent recreation and natural aesthetic resources.¹²

¹¹ The Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee participants include: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; Montana Department of Environmental Quality; the U.S. Forest Service; Avista Utilities; Weyerhaeuser (now SPP Montana, LLC); and the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group.

¹² A copy of NorthWestern Energy's 2020 shoreline standards is included as Appendix F in the PAD. The plan addresses shoreline development and maintenance activities at the Thompson Falls Project and five other FERC-licensed NorthWestern Energy hydroelectric projects and includes standards for boat dock construction and maintenance, bank stabilization, buffer zones, and permitting requirements.

Aesthetics

- Continue to implement the visual mitigation measures required under the existing license by maintaining the grey concrete exterior of the powerhouse and non-reflective materials on the transmission line to maintain minimal visual contrast with the surrounding landscape.
- Continue to implement the visual mitigation measures included in NorthWestern Energy's *Standards for the Design, Construction, Maintenance, and Operation of Shoreline Facilities on NorthWestern Energy Hydroelectric Projects*, including minimizing the size of boat docks; using natural, non-contrasting exterior finishes or colors on shoreline facilities; designing bank stabilization projects to mimic nearby stable banks where possible; and revegetating disturbed areas with native vegetation to ensure that any new structures or improvements minimize visual impacts.

Cultural Resources

- Continue to implement the historic properties management plan for the protection of cultural resources.

3.3 DAM SAFETY

It is important to note that dam safety constraints may exist and should be taken into consideration in the development of proposals and alternatives considered in the pending proceeding. For example, proposed modifications to the dam structure, such as the addition of flashboards or fish passage facilities, could impact the integrity of the dam structure. As the proposal and alternatives are developed, the applicant must evaluate the effects and ensure that the project would meet the Commission's dam safety criteria found in Part 12 of the Commission's regulations and the Engineering Guidelines (<https://www.ferc.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/part12-regs.pdf>).

3.4 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Commission staff will consider and assess all alternative recommendations for operational or facility modifications, as well as PM&E measures identified by the Commission, the agencies, Native-American tribes, NGOs, and the public.

3.5 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

At present, we propose to eliminate the following alternatives from detailed study in the EA.

3.5.1 Federal Government Takeover

In accordance with § 16.14 of the Commission's regulations, a federal department or agency may file a recommendation that the United States exercise its right to take over a hydroelectric power project with a license that is subject to sections 14 and 15 of the FPA.¹³ We do not consider federal takeover to be a reasonable alternative. Federal takeover of the project would require congressional approval. While that fact alone would not preclude further consideration of this alternative, there is currently no evidence showing that federal takeover should be recommended to Congress. No party has suggested that federal takeover would be appropriate, and no federal agency has expressed interest in operating the project.

3.5.2 Non-power License

A non-power license is a temporary license the Commission would terminate whenever it determines that another governmental agency is authorized and willing to assume regulatory authority and supervision over the lands and facilities covered by the non-power license. At this time, no governmental agency has suggested a willingness or ability to take over the project. No party has sought a non-power license, and we have no basis for concluding that the Thompson Falls Project should no longer be used to produce power. Thus, we do not consider a non-power license a reasonable alternative to relicensing the project.

3.5.3 Project Decommissioning

As the Commission has previously held, decommissioning is not a reasonable alternative to relicensing in most cases.¹⁴ Decommissioning can be accomplished in

¹³ 16 U.S.C. §§ 791(a)-825(r).

¹⁴ See, e.g., *Eagle Crest Energy Co.*, 153 FERC ¶ 61,058, at P 67 (2015); *Public Utility District No. 1 of Pend Oreille County*, 112 FERC ¶ 61,055, at P 82 (2005);

different ways depending on the project, its environment, and the particular resource needs.¹⁵ For these reasons, the Commission does not speculate about possible decommissioning measures at the time of relicensing, but rather waits until an applicant actually proposes to decommission a project, or a participant in a relicensing proceeding demonstrates that there are serious resource concerns that cannot be addressed with appropriate license measures and that make decommissioning a reasonable alternative.¹⁶ NorthWestern Energy does not propose decommissioning, nor does the record to date demonstrate there are serious resource concerns that cannot be mitigated if the project is relicensed; as such, there is no reason, at this time, to include decommissioning as a reasonable alternative to be evaluated and studied as part of staff's NEPA analysis.

4.0 SCOPE OF CUMULATIVE EFFECTS AND SITE-SPECIFIC RESOURCE ISSUES

4.1 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

According to the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing NEPA (50 C.F.R. 1508.7), a cumulative impact is the effect on the environment that results from the incremental effect of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can

Midwest Hydro, Inc., 111 FERC ¶ 61,327, at PP 35-38 (2005).

¹⁵ In the unlikely event that the Commission denies relicensing a project or a licensee decides to surrender an existing project, the Commission must approve a surrender "upon such conditions with respect to the disposition of such works as may be determined by the Commission." 18 C.F.R. § 6.2 (2019). This can include simply shutting down the power operations, removing all or parts of the project (including the dam), or restoring the site to its pre-project condition.

¹⁶ See generally *Project Decommissioning at Relicensing*; Policy Statement, FERC Stats. & Regs., Regulations Preambles (1991-1996), ¶ 31,011 (1994); see also *City of Tacoma, Washington*, 110 FERC ¶ 61,140 (2005) (finding that unless and until the Commission has a specific decommissioning proposal, any further environmental analysis of the effects of project decommissioning would be both premature and speculative).

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result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time, including hydropower and other land and water development activities.

4.1.1 Resources That Could Be Cumulatively Affected

Based on information in the PAD for the Thompson Falls Project, and preliminary staff analysis, we have identified fisheries as resources that could be cumulatively affected by the proposed continued operation and maintenance of the Thompson Falls in combination with other hydroelectric projects and other activities in the Lower Clark Fork watershed.

4.1.2 Geographic Scope

Our geographic scope of analysis for cumulatively affected resources is defined by the physical limits or boundaries of: (1) the proposed action's effect on the resources, and (2) contributing effects from other hydropower and non-hydropower activities within the basin. We have identified the geographic scope for our cumulative effects analysis for fisheries to include the Clark Fork River from the Thompson Falls Reservoir downstream to where the Clark Fork River enters Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho. We identified this geographic scope because peaking operations and fish passage measures at the Thompson Falls Project in combination with the Clark Fork Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. 2058, may affect fish resources in this approximate 65-mile reach of the Clark Fork River.

4.1.3 Temporal Scope

The temporal scope of our cumulative effects analysis in the EA will include a discussion of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions and their effects on each resource that could be cumulatively affected. Based on the potential term of a new license, the temporal scope will look 30 to 50 years into the future, concentrating on the effect on the resources from reasonably foreseeable future actions. The historical discussion will, by necessity, be limited to the amount of available information for each resource. The quality and quantity of information, however, diminishes as we analyze resources further away in time from the present.

4.2 RESOURCE ISSUES

In this section, we present a preliminary list of environmental issues to be addressed in the EA. We identified these issues, which are listed by resource area, by reviewing the PAD and the Commission's record for the Thompson Falls Project. This

list is not intended to be exhaustive or final, but contains those issues raised to date that could have substantial effects. After the scoping process is complete, we will review the list and determine the appropriate level of analysis needed to address each issue in the EA. Those issues identified by an asterisk (*) will be analyzed for both cumulative and site-specific effects.

4.2.1 Geologic and Soils Resources

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on shoreline erosion in the project area.

4.2.2 Water Quality

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on water quality (including dissolved oxygen and total dissolved gas levels).

4.2.3 Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on water levels, aquatic habitat, and fish resources in Thompson Falls reservoir.*
- Effects of project operation and maintenance on water levels, aquatic habitat, and fish resources in the bypassed reach and in the Clark Fork River downstream of the powerhouses.*
- Effects of project operation and maintenance on total dissolved gas levels and resulting effects on fish resources in the Clark Fork River.*
- Effects of project operation and maintenance on fish migration, including the adequacy of existing upstream fish passage measures.*
- Effects of entrainment and impingement on fish resources.*

4.2.4 Terrestrial Resources

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on wetland and riparian habitats and associated wildlife.

4.2.5 Threatened and Endangered Species

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on bull trout, Canada lynx, grizzly bear, Spalding's campion (also known as Spalding's catchfly), and yellow-billed cuckoo, which are federally-listed as threatened; North American wolverine, which has been proposed for listing as threatened; and whitebark pine which is a candidate species for federal listing.
- Effects of project operation and maintenance on bull trout designated critical habitat.

4.2.6 Recreation Resources

- Adequacy of existing project recreational facilities in meeting recreation demand at the project.
- Effects of project operation and maintenance activities, including reservoir level fluctuations and minimum flows, on existing recreational facilities, recreational use, and public safety.

4.2.7 Aesthetics

- Effects of project operation and maintenance activities, including any changes in reservoir fluctuations, on aesthetic resources.

4.2.8 Cultural Resources

- Effects of project operation and maintenance activities, including reservoir level fluctuations, on cultural resources.

4.2.9 Developmental Resources

- Effects of proposed or recommended environmental measures on project generation and economics.

5.0 PROPOSED STUDIES

Depending upon the findings of studies completed by NorthWestern Energy and

the recommendations of the consulted entities, NorthWestern Energy will consider, and may propose certain other measures to enhance environmental resources affected by the project as part of the proposed action. NorthWestern Energy’s initial study proposals are identified by resource area in table 1. Detailed information on NorthWestern Energy’s initial study proposals can be found in the PAD. Further studies may need to be added to this list based on comments provided to the Commission and NorthWestern Energy from interested participants, including Native-American tribes.

Table 1. NorthWestern Energy's initial study proposals for the Thompson Falls Project. (Source: PAD)

Resource Area	Proposed Study
General	Test potential operational scenarios to provide flexible capacity and to evaluate how these operational alternatives affect reservoir elevations, power generation, shoreline stability, and other environmental resources at the project.
Water Quality	Water quality monitoring study to assess water quality conditions (including water temperature, water chemistry and turbidity) at the project, additional sampling aimed at determining source of any lead in water samples taken downstream of the project, and continue to evaluate the operation of the main channel dam spillway and new radial gates to assess the preferred operation to minimize total dissolved gas levels
Aquatic Resources	Continue to collect baseline fisheries surveys upstream of the dam, handling and recording all fish at the fish passage facility workstation, and monitoring fish

Resource Area	Proposed Study
	movements via remote arrays in the Thompson River and Prospect creek
	Study various spill configurations utilizing the new radial gates on the main channel dam and assess the different operational scenarios on upstream fish passage implications and effects to fish and aquatic resources
	Conduct two parallel studies to determine attraction and entrance efficiency of the upstream fish passage including (1) two-dimensional hydraulic study to characterize velocity fields and water depths downstream of the main channel dam and (2) a telemetry (radio-tag) study to posit movements, paths/rates, and fish behavior in response to hydraulic conditions in the near field.
Threatened and Endangered Species	Conduct a test of collecting and transporting juvenile bull trout from Thompson River (located upstream of the project) to Lake Pend Oreille downstream of the project as part of larger assessment to determine if downstream transport of juvenile bull trout increase populations of adfluvial bull trout in that watershed.
Recreation	Repeat the recreational visitor survey that was conducted in 2018 to update the results and capture visitor opinions under typical reservoir operating conditions.

Resource Area	Proposed Study
Cultural Resources	Conduct an updated cultural resources inventory of the project including evaluating the current National Register status of known cultural properties and make recommendations for their future management, and identify high-probability areas for the occurrence of both prehistoric and historic archeological properties within areas affected by project operation and assess whether any additional field inventory is needed.

6.0 REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND STUDIES

We are asking federal, state, and local resource agencies, Native-American tribes, NGOs, and the public to forward to the Commission any information that will assist us in conducting an accurate and thorough analysis of the project-specific and cumulative effects associated with relicensing the Thompson Falls Project. The types of information requested include, but are not limited to:

- information, quantitative data, or professional opinions that may help define the geographic and temporal scope of the analysis (both site-specific and cumulative effects), and that helps identify significant environmental issues;
- identification of, and information from, any other EA, EIS, or similar environmental study (previous, on-going, or planned) relevant to the proposed relicensing of the Thompson Falls Project;
- existing information and any data that would help to describe the past and present actions and effects of the project and other developmental activities on environmental and socioeconomic resources;
- information that would help characterize the existing environmental conditions and habitats;

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- the identification of any federal, state, or local resource plans, and any future project proposals in the affected resource area (e.g., proposals to construct or operate water treatment facilities, recreation areas, water diversions, timber harvest activities, or fish management programs), along with any implementation schedules);
- documentation that the proposed project would or would not contribute to cumulative adverse or beneficial effects on any resources. Documentation can include, but need not be limited to, how the project would interact with other projects in the area and other developmental activities; study results; resource management policies; and reports from federal and state agencies, local agencies, Native-American tribes, NGOs, and the public;
- documentation showing why any resources should be excluded from further study or consideration; and
- study requests by federal and state agencies, local agencies, Native-American tribes, NGOs, and the public that would help provide a framework for collecting pertinent information on the resource areas under consideration necessary for the Commission to prepare the EA/EIS for the project.

All requests for studies filed with the Commission must meet the criteria found in Appendix A, *Study Plan Criteria*.

The requested information, comments, and study requests should be submitted to the Commission no later than **October 27, 2020**. All filings must clearly identify the following on the first page: **Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project (P-1869-060)**. Scoping comments may be filed electronically via the Internet. See 18 C.F.R. 385.2001(a)(1)(iii) and the instructions on the Commission's website <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 or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659. 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:

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Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

Register online at <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/FERCOOnline.aspx> to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to this or other pending projects. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOOnlineSupport@ferc.gov.

Any questions concerning how to file written comments with the Commission should be directed to Mike Tust at (202) 502-6522 or michael.tust@ferc.gov. Additional information about the Commission's licensing process and the Thompson Falls Project may be obtained from the Commission's website, www.ferc.gov.

7.0 EA PREPARATION

Currently, we anticipate the need to prepare a draft and final EA. The EA will be sent to all persons and entities on the Commission's service and mailing lists for the Thompson Falls Project. The EA will include our recommendations for operating procedures, as well as environmental protection and enhancement measures that should be part of any license issued by the Commission. All recipients will then have 30 days to review the EA and file written comments with the Commission.

A copy of the process plan, which has a complete list of relicensing milestones for the Thompson Falls Project, including those for developing the license application, is attached as Appendix B to this SD1.

8.0 PROPOSED EA OUTLINE

The preliminary outline for the EA for the Thompson Falls Project is as follows:

TABLE OF CONTENTS
LIST OF FIGURES
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 1.1 Application
 1.2 Purpose of Action and Need for Power
 1.3 Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

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- 1.3.1 Federal Power Act
 - 1.3.1.1 Section 18 Fishway Prescriptions
 - 1.3.1.2 Section 4(e) Recommendations
 - 1.3.1.3 Section 10(j) Recommendations
- 1.3.2 Clean Water Act
- 1.3.3 Endangered Species Act
- 1.3.4 Coastal Zone Management Act
- 1.3.5 National Historic Preservation Act
- Other statutes as applicable
- 1.4 Public Review and Comment
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 - 2.1 No-action Alternative
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 - 2.2.1 Proposed Project Facilities
 - 2.2.2 Proposed Project Operation
 - 2.2.3 Proposed Environmental Measures
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 - 3.1 General Description of the River Basin
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4.0 DEVELOPMENTAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Power and Economic Benefits of the Project

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5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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5.4 Recommendations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

5.5 Consistency with Comprehensive Plans

6.0 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (OR OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACT)

7.0 LITERATURE CITED

8.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft License Conditions Recommended by Staff

9.0 COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Section 10(a)(2) of the FPA, 16 U.S.C. section 803(a)(2)(A), requires the Commission to consider the extent to which a project is consistent with federal and state comprehensive plans for improving, developing, or conserving a waterway or waterways affected by a project. The staff has preliminarily identified and reviewed the plans listed below that may be relevant to the Thompson Falls Project. Agencies are requested to review this list and inform the Commission staff of any changes. If there are other comprehensive plans that should be considered for this list that are not on file with the Commission, or if there are more recent versions of the plans already listed, they can be filed for consideration with the Commission according to 18 CFR 2.19 of the Commission's regulations. Please follow the instructions for filing a plan at <http://www.ferc.gov/industries/hydropower/gen-info/licensing/complan.pdf>.

The following is a list of comprehensive plans currently on file with the Commission that may be relevant to the Thompson Falls Project:

Forest Service. 1986. Lolo National Forest plan. Department of Agriculture, Missoula, Montana. February 1986.

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Montana State Legislature. 1997. House Bill Number 546. Total Maximum Daily Load. Helena, Montana.

National Park Service. The Nationwide Rivers Inventory. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 1993.

Northwest Power and Conservation Council. 2014. Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program. Portland, Oregon. Council Document 2014-12. October 2014.

Northwest Power and Conservation Council. 2016. The Seventh Northwest Conservation and Electric Power Plan. Portland, Oregon. Council Document 2016-02. February 2016.

Northwest Power and Conservation Council. 1988. Protected areas amendments and response to comments. Portland, Oregon. Council Document 88-22. September 14, 1988.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. n.d. Fisheries USA: the recreational fisheries policy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Washington, D.C.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Canadian Wildlife Service. 1986. North American waterfowl management plan. Department of the Interior. Environment Canada. May 1986.

10.0 MAILING LISTS

The list below is the Commission's official mailing list for the Thompson Falls Project. If you want to receive future mailings for this proceeding and are not included in the list below, please send your request by email to FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov. In lieu of an email request, you may submit a paper request. 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 written or emailed requests to be added to the mailing lists must clearly identify the following: **Thompson Falls Hydroelectric Project (P-1869-060)**. You may use the same methods if requesting removal from the mailing list below.

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Register online at <https://ferconline.ferc.gov/FERCOOnline.aspx> to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to this project or other pending projects. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659.

Official Mailing List for the Thompson Falls Project

<p>Director American Whitewater Affiliation, Inc. P.O. Box 1540 Cullowhee, North Carolina 28723</p>	<p>Town of Milltown (MT) Bonner Development Group P.O. Box 471 Bonner, Montana 59823-0471</p>	<p>FERC Contact Bonneville Power Administration P.O. Box 3621 Portland, Oregon 97208-3621 Multnomah</p>
<p>Bureau of Reclamation P.O. Box 36900 Billings, Montana 59107-6900 Yellowstone</p>	<p>Montana Area Manager Bureau of Reclamation P.O. Box 30137 Billings, Montana 59107-0137 Yellowstone</p>	<p>District Supervisor Dodson Irrigation District P.O. Box 1340 Malta, Montana 59523</p>
<p>State of Montana Director Environmental Quality Council P.O. Box 201704 Helena, Montana 59620-1704 Lewis and Clark</p>	<p>Tracy King President Fort Belknap Indian Community 656 Agency Main St. Harlem, Montana 59526-9455 Blaine</p>	<p>Manager Glasgow Irrigation District P.O. Box 271 Glasgow, Montana 59230</p>
<p>District Supervisor Malta Irrigation District P.O. Box 1340 Malta, Montana 59523</p>	<p>Montana Coop. Fishery Research Unit U.S.D.I., Dept. of Biology Montana State University Bozeman, Montana 59717-0001 Gallatin</p>	<p>Director Montana Department of Environmental Quality P.O. Box 200901 Helena, Montana 59620-0901 Lewis and Clark</p>

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<p>Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation P.O. Box 201601 Helena, Montana 59620-1601 Lewis and Clark</p>	<p>Manager Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks 2300 Lake Elmo Drive Billings, Montana 59105</p>	<p>Montana Department of Agriculture Agriculture & Livestock Bldg. Capitol Station Helena, Montana 59620-0201</p>
<p>Don Skaar Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks P.O. Box 200701 Helena, Montana 59620-0701</p>	<p>Sarah Bond Montana Dept. of Natural Resources P.O. Box 201601 Helena, Montana 59620-1601</p>	<p>Montana Dept. of Natural Resources P.O. Box 201601 Helena, Montana 59620-1601</p>
<p>Montana Dept. of State Lands Capitol Station Helena, Montana 59620</p>	<p>ATTY. General Montana Office of Attorney General State Capitol Helena, Montana 59601</p>	<p>Nicholas Fels Parner Covington & Burling 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W. Washington, District of Columbia 20004 United States</p>
<p>Mary Gail Sullivan NorthWestern Corporation (Montana) 11 E Park Butte, Montana 59701 United States</p>	<p>District Manager Paradise Valley Irrigation District P.O. Box 1417 Chinook, Montana 59523-4926</p>	<p>U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs Rocky Mountain Regional Office 2021 4th Avenue North Billings, Montana 59101 Yellowstone</p>
<p>U.S. Bureau of Land Management 5001 Southgate Drive Billings, Montana 59101-4669 Yellowstone</p>	<p>U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Ecological Services 2900 4th Ave. N Ste. 301 Billings, Montana 59101-1266 Yellowstone</p>	<p>Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service P.O. Box 25486 Denver, Colorado 80225-0486 Jefferson</p>

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<p>Director U.S. Geological Survey 3162 Bozeman Avenue Montana State Office Helena, Montana 59626-0001 Lewis and Clark</p>	<p>Regional Hydropower Coord. USDA Forest Service P.O. Box 7669 Missoula, Montana 59807-7669 Missoula</p>	<p>Regional Hydropower Coord. USDA Forest Service Federal Building 324 25th St. Ogden, Utah 84401 United States</p>
<p>Forest Supervisor Lolo National Forest USDA Forest Service Building 24, Fort Missoula Missoula, Montana 59804</p>	<p>District Ranger Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger Districts USDA Forest Service 24 Fort Missoula Road Missoula, Montana 59803 Sanders</p>	<p>M’Leah Woodard Interregional Hydropower Team USDA Forest Service U.S. Forest Service Intermountain Region 324 25th Street Ogden, Utah 84401 United States</p>
<p>Patrick Redmond, ESQ Attorney-USDA Office of the General Counsel, USDA 1400 Independence Ave. SW Room 3336-B Washington, District of Columbia 20250</p>	<p>Nicholas Pino 26 Fort Missoula Rd. c/o USDA Office of the General Counsel Missoula Montana 59804 United States</p>	<p>Molly E. Puchlerz R1 Forest Service Land Special 26 Fort Missoula Road Missoula, Montana 59804</p>

**APPENDIX A
STUDY PLAN CRITERIA
18 CFR Section 5.9(b)**

Any information or study request must contain the following:

1. Describe the goals and objectives of each study proposal and the information to be obtained;
2. If applicable, explain the relevant resource management goals of the agencies or Native-American tribes with jurisdiction over the resource to be studied;
3. If the requester is not a resource agency, explain any relevant public interest considerations in regard to the proposed study;
4. Describe existing information concerning the subject of the study proposal, and the need for additional information;
5. Explain any nexus between project operations and effects (direct, indirect, and/or cumulative) on the resource to be studied, and how the study results would inform the development of license requirements;
6. Explain how any proposed study methodology (including any preferred data collection and analysis techniques, or objectively quantified information, and a schedule including appropriate field season(s) and the duration) is consistent with generally accepted practice in the scientific community or, as appropriate, considers relevant tribal values and knowledge; and
7. Describe considerations of level of effort and cost, as applicable, and why proposed alternative studies would not be sufficient to meet the stated information needs.

**APPENDIX B
THOMPSON FALLS PROJECT PROCESS PLAN AND SCHEDULE**

Shaded milestones are unnecessary if there are no study disputes. If the due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the due date is the following business day. Early filings or issuances will not result in changes to these deadlines.

Responsible Party	Pre-Filing Milestone	Date	FERC Regulation
Licensee	File NOI/PAD	7/1/20	5.5, 5.6
FERC	Tribal Meetings	7/31/20	5.7
FERC	Issue Notice of Commencement of Proceeding and Scoping Document 1	8/28/20	5.8
FERC	Scoping Meetings (<i>Waived</i>)	N/A*	5.8(b)(viii)
All Stakeholders	File Comments on PAD/Scoping Document 1 and Study Requests	10/27/20	5.9
FERC	Issue Scoping Document 2 (if necessary)	12/11/20	5.10
Licensee	File Proposed Study Plan	12/11/20	5.11(a)
All Stakeholders	Proposed Study Plan Meeting	1/10/21	5.11(e)
All Stakeholders	File Comments on Proposed Study Plan	3/11/21	5.12
Licensee	File Revised Study Plan	4/10/21	5.13(a)
All Stakeholders	File Comments on Revised Study Plan	4/25/21	5.13(b)
FERC	Issue Director's Study Plan Determination	5/10/21	5.13(c)
Mandatory Conditioning Agencies	File Any Study Disputes	5/30/21	5.14(a)
Dispute Panel	Select Third Dispute Resolution Panel Member	6/14/21	5.14(d)
Dispute Panel	Convene Dispute Resolution Panel	6/19/21	5.14(d)(3)
Licensee	File Comments on Study Disputes	6/24/21	5.14(i)

Responsible Party	Pre-Filing Milestone	Date	FERC Regulation
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Technical Conference	6/29/21	5.14(j)
Dispute Panel	Issue Dispute Resolution Panel Findings	7/19/21	5.14(k)
FERC	Issue Director's Study Dispute Determination	8/8/21	5.14(l)
Licensee	First Study Season	Spr/Sum 21	5.15(a)
Licensee	File Initial Study Report	5/10/22	5.15(c)(1)
All Stakeholders	Initial Study Report Meeting	5/25/22	5.15(c)(2)
Licensee	File Initial Study Report Meeting Summary	6/9/22	5.15(c)(3)
All Stakeholders	File Disagreements/Requests to Amend Study Plan	7/9/22	5.15(c)(4)
All Stakeholders	File Responses to Disagreements/Amendment Requests	8/8/22	5.15(c)(5)
FERC	Issue Director's Determination on Disagreements/Amendments	9/7/22	5.15(c)(6)
Licensee	Second Study Season	Spr/Sum 22	5.15(a)
Licensee	File Updated Study Report	5/10/23	5.15(f)
All Stakeholders	Updated Study Report Meeting	5/25/23	5.15(f)
Licensee	File Updated Study Report Meeting Summary	6/9/23	5.15(f)
All Stakeholders	File Disagreements/Requests to Amend Study Plan	7/9/23	5.15(f)
All Stakeholders	File Responses to Disagreements/Amendment Requests	8/8/23	5.15(f)
FERC	Issue Director's Determination on Disagreements/Amendments	9/7/23	5.15(f)
Licensee	File Preliminary Licensing Proposal (or Draft License Application)	8/3/23	5.16(a)-(c)

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Responsible Party	Pre-Filing Milestone	Date	FERC Regulation
All Stakeholders	File Comments on Preliminary Licensing Proposal (or Draft License Application)	11/1/23	5.16(e)
Licensee	File Final License Application	12/31/23	5.17
Licensee	Issue Public Notice of Final License Application Filing	1/14/24	5.17(d)(2)

Notes:

* 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 and site visit in this case.