

Permittee submits updates on Hydropower Project

In July 2010 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued a preliminary permit to Hydrodynamics Inc. of Bozeman to study transmission options, engineering development and powerhouse design for a hydropower project linking transmission options to an unnamed Idaho utility. The permit addresses a proposed hydropower project on the East or West Rosebud Creeks, Beartooth Ranger District, Custer National Forest. These permits are two among a total of four active permits issued across the Custer and Gallatin National Forests. The preliminary permit does not authorize any land disturbing activities.

On November 30, 2011 Hydrodynamics submitted a progress report on East Rosebud to FERC in compliance with their permit. The proposed project and site specific developments could include a diversion dam, a 2.2-mile-long steel penstock and a new powerhouse and substation. The company estimates an average annual generation of 40 gigawatt-hours. Hydrodynamics of Bozeman has three years to complete a feasibility study in which they could and must apply for a special use permit from the Forest Service for any ground disturbance necessary in order to determine the feasibility of the actions proposed under the FERC permit. Currently FERC has control over the preliminary permit and the Forest Service does not have authority on any decisions to this permit.

If Hydrodynamics seeks a special use permit then the Forest

Service would have responsibility for the site specific feasibility study. Any ground disturbance would follow NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) guidelines seeking a period for public comment on specific site disturbances as they relate to the special use permit only. From start to finish this is typically at a minimum, a 60-day process.

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Both East and West Rosebud Creeks have been recommended in the Custer National Forest

Plan for Wild and Scenic River designation. Although recommended in the forest plan, any action to further this designation must come from congress.

Interested public wishing to voice their feedback can do so most effectively by submitting comments to: <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/elibrary.asp> and searching for docket P-13531 (East Rosebud) and P-13532 (West Rosebud). If a Forest Service special use permit is requested for any ground disturbance then the public will be asked to comment regarding stated disturbance. Currently the Beartooth Ranger District only has information pertaining to the preliminary permit held by FERC. Hydrodynamics Inc. of Bozeman has not requested a special use permit to date for any ground disturbing activities. The Beartooth Ranger District can be reached at 406-446-2103.