

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20426  
January 17, 2013

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 14241-000—Alaska  
Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project  
Alaska Energy Authority

Wayne Dyok  
Susitna-Watana Project Manager  
Alaska Energy Authority  
813 West Northern Lights Boulevard  
Anchorage, AK 99503

**Reference: Revised Study Plan Determination Schedule**

Dear Mr. Dyok:

On December 31, 2012, Commission staff issued a letter modifying the study plan determination (SPD) schedule for 13 of the 58 studies proposed by the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) in its revised study plan for the Susitna-Watana Project No. 14241. The schedule was modified because there was insufficient detail in those 13 study plans upon which to complete a SPD.

The December 31, 2012 letter included a schedule for AEA to file by March 15, 2013, the following additional information: (1) implementation plans for 3 of the 13 studies (studies 9.5, 9.6, and 9.8), and (2) the final list of proposed 2013 middle and lower river focus areas described in study 8.5 that would affect the implementation of the remaining 10 of the 13 studies (studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, and 9.9), as well as two of the studies requiring implementation plans (studies 9.6 and 9.8).<sup>1</sup> The December 31, 2012 letter also required AEA to file the results of its open-water flow routing model and initial habitat mapping conducted in 2012 by January 21, 2013, and to hold a meeting with stakeholders to discuss the study results and draft implementation plans by February 15, 2013. The December 31, 2012 schedule included a Commission staff study plan determination for the 13 studies by May 14, 2013.

On January 7, 2013, AEA filed a letter requesting Commission staff withdraw the revised schedule, and reestablish the original deadline of February 1, 2013 for completing

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<sup>1</sup> Study 9.5 does not have any components that would be implemented within focus areas; therefore, it would not be affected by the final selection of focus areas.

the SPD for all 58 studies.<sup>2</sup> AEA contends that the revised study plan contains sufficient detail for the Commission staff to complete its SPD for all 58 studies, and the revised schedule would cause AEA to miss the entire 2013 field season for the 13 studies. Finally, AEA requests that, in the event that Commission staff still determines that additional information is needed prior to completing the SPD for the 13 studies, the Commission staff modify the schedule for the 13 studies such that the SPD would be issued by April 1, 2013, which would allow sufficient time to complete the necessary prerequisites to implement all of the studies in the 2013 study season.

As explained in the December 31, 2012 letter, the requested information is integral to determining whether the studies would gather the needed information to process AEA's license application. Therefore, AEA's request to withdraw the December 31, 2012, letter is denied. However, in light of AEA's commitment to provide the results of its 2012 open-water flow routing model and habitat mapping efforts, draft implementation plans, and proposed focus areas for the middle and lower river by January 31, 2012; hold meetings with stakeholders to discuss the study results, draft implementation plans, and focus areas on February 14 and 15; and file final implementation plans and focus areas by March 1, 2013; we are modifying the schedule for completing the SPD on the 13 studies as proposed by AEA and set forth in Attachment A. Subject to AEA providing the above information and holding the meetings as proposed, the SPD is now scheduled to be issued by April 1, 2013. If AEA is unable to meet its proposed filing schedule, the SPD schedule will be adjusted accordingly.

By copy of this letter, interested stakeholders are notified of the modification to the schedule for the 13 previously identified studies, as described in Attachment A, and are reminded that comments on the 45 other study plans included in AEA's December 14, 2012, revised study plan, are still due by January 18, 2013. The Commission staff's study plan determination for the remaining 45 studies is scheduled to be issued by February 1, 2013. The initial and updated study reports for all studies are still due February 3, 2014, and February 2, 2015, respectively.

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<sup>2</sup> On January 11, 2013, AEA filed a response to a January 2, 2013 letter from the National Marine Fisheries Service requesting Commission staff find the revised study plan deficient. Many of the same points raised in AEA's January 7, 2013 letter to Commission staff are raised in its January 11, 2013 letter.

If you have any questions, please contact David Turner at (202) 502-6091.

Sincerely,

Jeff C. Wright  
Director  
Office of Energy Projects

Enclosure: Attachment A—Revised Study Plan Determination Schedule for  
December 14, 2012, revised study plan studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5,  
7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.

cc: Mailing List  
Public Files

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**REVISED STUDY PLAN DETERMINATION SCHEDULE FOR**  
**DECEMBER 14, 2012, REVISED STUDY PLAN STUDIES 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6,**  
**7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.**

A study plan determination will be issued for the following studies in accordance with the schedule below: (1) Baseline Water Quality (study 5.5), (2) Water Quality Modeling Study (study 5.6), (3) Mercury Assessment and Potential for Bioaccumulation Study (study 5.7), (4) Geomorphology Study (study 6.5), (5) Fluvial Geomorphology Modeling Below Watana Dam Study (study 6.6), (6) Groundwater Study (study 7.5), (7) Ice Processes in the Susitna River Study (study 7.6), (8) Fish and Aquatics Instream Flow Study (study 8.5), (9) Riparian Instream Flow Study (study 8.6), (10) Study of Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Upper Susitna River (study 9.5), (11) Study of Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Middle and Lower Susitna River (study 9.6), (12) River Productivity Study (study 9.8), and (13) Characterization and Mapping of Aquatic Habitats (study 9.9).

Shaded milestones are unnecessary if there are no study disputes filed by any agency with mandatory conditioning authority. If a due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the due date is the following business day.

<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Pre-Filing Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>FERC Regulation</b>
AEA	AEA files results of 2012 open-water flow routing model and habitat mapping; draft implementation plans for the Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Upper Susitna River (study 9.5), the Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Lower and Middle Susitna River (study 9.6), and River Productivity (study 9.8) studies; all proposed focus areas; and a description of habitat units within the focus areas for all aquatic studies to be implemented in the middle Susitna River. <sup>3</sup>	January 31, 2013	N/A

<sup>3</sup> The December 31, 2012 letter did not request a description of the habitat units within the focus areas; however, AEA proposed to file this information in their January 7, 2013 filing.

AEA	AEA holds meetings to discuss the study results, proposed implementation plans, and selected focus areas in the middle and lower Susitna River.	February 14-15, 2013	N/A
AEA	AEA files final implementation plans for Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Upper Susitna River (study 9.5), the Fish Distribution and Abundance in the Lower and Middle Susitna River (study 9.6), and River Productivity (study 9.8) studies; and final focus areas for 2013 middle and lower river studies.	March 1, 2013	5.13(a)
All Stakeholders	Revised Study Plan Comments Due for studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.	March 18, 2013	5.13(b) d
FERC	Director's Study Plan Determination for studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.	April 1, 2013	5.13(c)
Mandatory Conditioning Agencies only	Any Study Disputes Due for studies 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 7.6, 8.5, 8.6, 9.5, 9.6, 9.8, and 9.9.	April 22, 2013	5.14(a)
Dispute Panel	Third Dispute Panel Member Selected	May 7, 2013	5.14(d)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Convenes	May 13, 2013	5.14(d)(3)
AEA	Applicant Comments on Study Disputes Due	May 17, 2013	5.14(i)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Technical Conference	May 22, 2013	5.14(j)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Findings Issued	June 11, 2013	5.14(k)
FERC	Director's Study Dispute Determination	July 1, 2013	5.14(l)