

September 3, 2021

VIA E-FILING

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20426

**Subject: Rumford Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2333-091)
Initial Study Report Meeting Summary**

Dear Secretary Bose:

Rumford Falls Hydro LLC (RFH or Licensee), a subsidiary of Brookfield Renewable, owns and operates the Rumford Falls Hydroelectric Project (Project) (FERC No. 2333). The Project is a two-development hydroelectric facility on the Androscoggin River in the Town of Rumford, Oxford County, Maine. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) license for the Project expires on September 30, 2024, and RFH is pursuing a new license for the Project through the Commission's Integrated Licensing Process as defined in 18 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 5.

In accordance with 18 CFR §5.15(c), the Initial Study Report (ISR) for the Project was filed with the Commission on August 6, 2021. The ISR describes the Licensee's overall progress in implementing the study plan and associated schedule, the data collected, and any variances from the study plans and schedule identified in the July 7, 2020 Revised Study Plan, as modified and/or approved in the Commission's August 6, 2020 Study Plan Determination, which included the following eight studies:

- 1) Water Quality Study
- 2) Angler Creel Survey
- 3) Recreation Study
- 4) Historic Architectural Survey
- 5) Aesthetic Flow Study
- 6) Impoundment Bass Spawning Survey
- 7) Flow Study for Aquatic Habitat Evaluation
- 8) Whitewater Boating Study

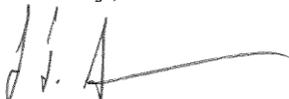
Subsequent to filing the ISR, RFH held a virtual ISR meeting with Commission staff and other relicensing participants on August 19, 2021, to discuss the available study results, as well as to discuss RFH's or the other relicensing participants' proposals, if any, to modify the study plans in light of the progress of the studies and data collected. RFH herein submits the attached meeting summary in accordance with 18 CFR §5.15(c)(3).

Rumford Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2333)
Initial Study Report Meeting Summary
September 3, 2021

In addition to filing this ISR Meeting Summary with the Commission, RFH is distributing this letter to those on the enclosed distribution list. This submittal is also available electronically in FERC's eLibrary system at <https://elibrary.ferc.gov/eLibrary/search> under docket P-2333.

If there are any questions or comments regarding this submittal, please contact me by phone at (207) 755-5613 or at luke.anderson@brookfieldrenewable.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. A.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Luke Anderson
Manager, Licensing
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cc: Distribution List
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Rumford Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2333)

Initial Study Report Meeting Summary

August 19, 2021, 10:00AM

Webex Conference Call

Attendees:

Ryan Hansen (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission [FERC])
Suzanne Novak (FERC)
Ingrid Brofman (FERC)
Julia Kolberg (FERC)
Kathy Howatt (Maine Department of Environmental Protection [MDEP])
Christopher Sferra (MDEP)
Jim Vogel (Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands)
George O'Keefe (Town of Rumford)
Stephen Heinz (Trout Unlimited [TU])
Brie Weisman (Rumford Resident)
Jon Star (Rumford Resident)
Luke Anderson (Rumford Falls Hydro LLC [RFH])
Peter Browne (HDR)
Dawn Cousens (HDR)
Kelly MacVane (HDR)
Drew Trested (Normandeau Associates, Inc.)

1.0 Introductions/Meeting Agenda

Mr. Luke Anderson (RFH) welcomed and identified call participants and reviewed meeting logistics.

Mr. Peter Browne (HDR) discussed the agenda for the meeting.

2.0 Purpose of Meeting

Mr. Browne specified that the Initial Study Report (ISR) for the Rumford Falls Hydroelectric Project (Project) was filed with FERC on August 6, 2021. Mr. Browne identified the purpose of the meeting referencing 18 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §5.15(c)(2).

3.0 Project Overview

Mr. Browne provided an overview of the Project, including facilities and operations.

4.0 Study Plan Development and Implementation

Mr. Browne reviewed the regulatory background and future Integrated Licensing Process (ILP) milestones for the Project.

5.0 Study Status and Summary

5.1 Overview of Study Status

Ms. Dawn Cousens (HDR) provided an overview of the status of each of the eight relicensing studies being conducted at the Project, which include:

1. Water Quality Study
2. Angler Creel Survey
3. Recreation Study
4. Historic Architectural Survey
5. Aesthetic Flow Study
6. Impoundment Bass Spawning Survey
7. Flow Study for Aquatic Habitat Evaluation
8. Whitewater Boating Study

Ms. Cousens specified that RFH is currently in the first study season within the ILP schedule consistent with the FERC-issued Process Plan and Schedule for the Project. Ms. Cousens noted that the Recreation Study and the Angler Creel Survey were postponed to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, because study and on-site consultation with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) has occurred for the Angler Creel Survey, the study was identified as ongoing.

Ms. Cousens specified the following studies were ongoing:

- Water Quality Study
- Aesthetic Flow Study
- Flow Study for Aquatic Habitat Evaluation
- Whitewater Boating Study

Ms. Cousens specified the Historic Architectural Survey and the Impoundment Bass Spawning Surveys have been completed. Ms. Cousens noted that study reports for the Impoundment Bass Spawning Survey and Water Quality Study were included within the ISR.

Ms. Cousens specified that RFH anticipates that the Aesthetic Flow Study, Flow Study for Aquatic Habitat Evaluation, and the Whitewater Boating Study will be completed in 2021 and the study reports will be included in the Updated Study Report (USR), which will be filed with the Commission on or before August 6, 2022.

Ms. Cousens stated that RFH anticipates the Angler Creel Survey, Recreation Study, and Water Quality Study will be completed in 2022 (study season 2) and the associated reports are anticipated to be filed as supplemental information after the Final License Application (FLA) is filed and by the end of 2022.

Ms. Cousens specified that RFH will continue to provide quarterly study progress reports and the next report will be filed with the Commission on November 1, 2021.

Ms. Ingrid Brofman (FERC) clarified that there was an error referencing the Recreation Study in Table 4-1 of the ISR. RFH notes that the Recreation Study should reference the second footnote under Table 4-1, which specifies that the survey was postponed to 2022 due to safety concerns and anticipated anomalous usage due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2 Status of Ongoing Studies

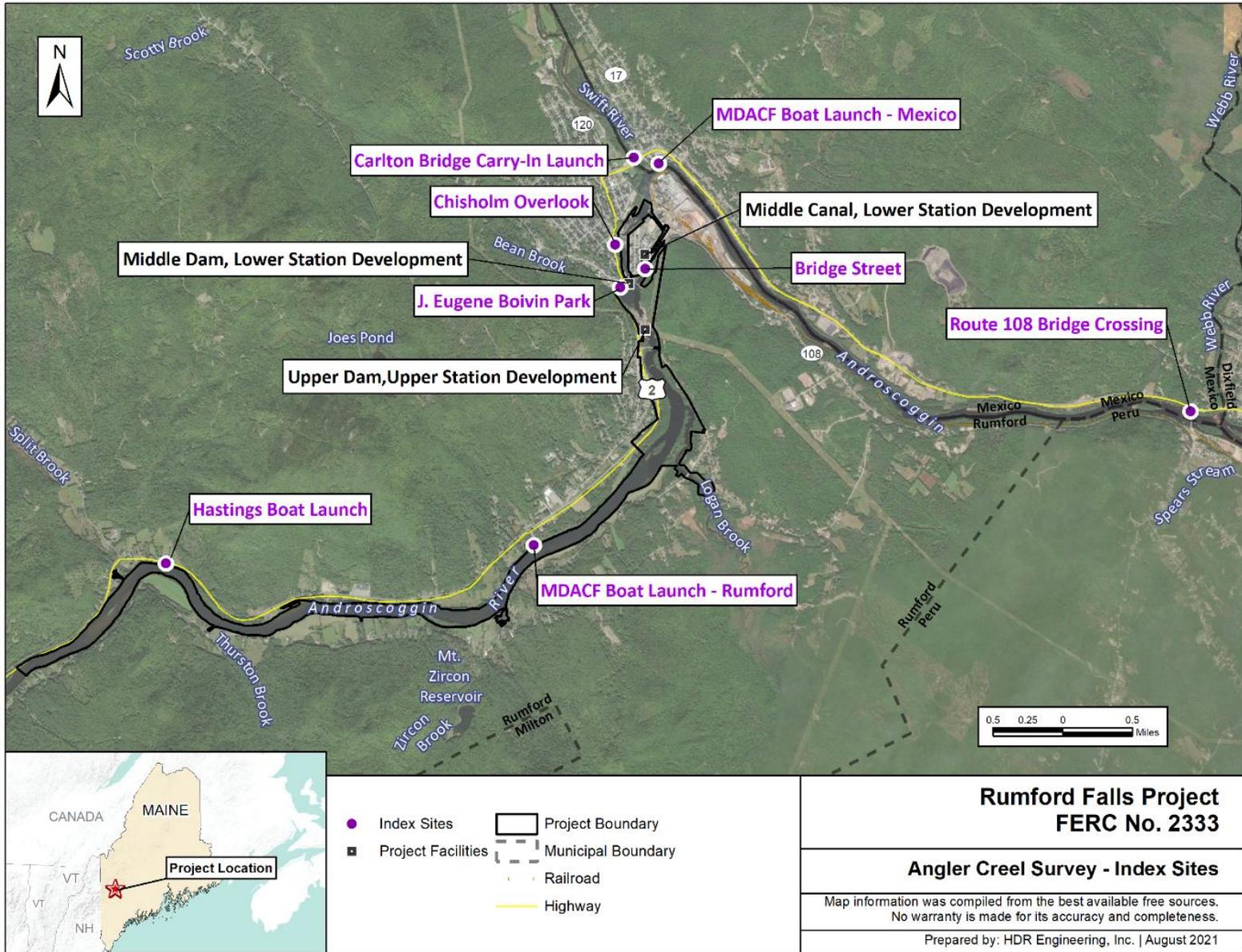
5.2.1 Angler Creel Survey

Mr. Drew Trested (Normandeau Associates, Inc.) provided a summary of the status and progress of the study. Mr. Stephen Heinz (TU) specified that RFH postponed the study to 2022, but also identified it as ongoing. Mr. Trested indicated that because study and on-site consultation with MDIFW has occurred for the study, it was identified as ongoing.

Ms. Brofman asked if a second year of study would be conducted and specified that it will not be a FERC requirement since it is not needed for its analysis. Mr. Trested indicated that through consultation with MDIFW, it was determined that RFH would consult with MDIFW to determine if a second year of the study was needed after the first year of the study was conducted. Mr. Anderson confirmed that RFH is committed to conducting a second year of study if MDIFW determines it is needed.

Ms. Brofman asked for confirmation that the study season will end in November. Mr. Trested confirmed the study will be conducted through November 2022.

Per request of Ms. Brofman, the following figure is being provided to identify the index sites for the study identified in Table 4-2 of the ISR. RFH notes that the Middle Canal index site will be viewed via Bridge Street, and as specified during the ISR meeting, RFH will develop a series of vantage points along the shoreline of the Upper Dam impoundment to the upper extent of the FERC Project boundary to collect index counts of angler use to supplement counts at the boat launch facilities.



5.2.2 Aesthetic Flow Study

Ms. Cousens provided a summary of the status and progress of the study.

Ms. Brofman asked about the process used to determine if the controlled flow assessment can be conducted and how much notice is provided to the focus group. Ms. Cousens indicated that flows and logistics are considered when scheduling the controlled flow assessment. Ms. Cousens indicated that RFH notified the focus group of the tentative dates identified in late-August for the controlled flow assessment with sufficient notice. Ms. Cousens specified that in the event the controlled flow assessment is canceled, notice will be provided to the focus group as soon as RFH can make an informed decision. Mr. Anderson indicated Brookfield has coordinated with the focus group, and will continue to do so, to identify an appropriate time for the controlled flow assessment. Mr. Anderson indicated that flows of at least 2,200 to 2,300 cfs are required for the study. Mr. Anderson noted that the flows have generally been near or below 1,500 cfs this summer due to drought conditions in the upper watershed and that the focus group has been updated and is aware of the drought conditions.

Ms. Brofman asked when the focus group was notified of the targeted dates for the controlled flow assessment at the end of August. Ms. Cousens indicated an email was sent to the group the week of August 9, 2021. RFH further clarifies that the focus group was notified on August 13, 2021, that RFH would be targeting August 30 or August 31, 2021, as potential days to reschedule the controlled flow assessment. RFH also notes that an initial meeting invitation was sent to the focus group on May 11, 2021, for the controlled assessment that was scheduled for June 16, 2021, which was canceled due to low flows.

Mr. Ryan Hansen (FERC) asked if RFH has a contingency plan if flows are not sufficient in August to conduct the controlled flow assessment. Mr. Anderson indicated that RFH anticipates flows will be appropriate later this year to conduct the study, though if the drought continues, there is too much water associated with storm events or there are other complications, the study would be conducted next spring.

5.2.3 Flow Study for Aquatic Habitat Evaluation

Mr. Trested provided a summary of the status and progress of the study.

Mr. Heinz asked if the habitat mapping had been conducted. Mr. Trested indicated the habitat mapping had been conducted and the preliminary results have been provided to, and are being discussed with, MDIFW. Ms. Kathy Howatt (MDEP) indicated the MDEP requested habitat suitability criteria for benthic macroinvertebrates be included in the Flow Study for Aquatic Habitat Evaluation to supplement information obtained during the Outlet Stream Aquatic Habitat component of the Water Quality Study. Mr. Trested confirmed this information was included and was provided to MDEP and MDIFW.

5.2.4 Whitewater Boating Study

During prior comments on the Aesthetic Flow Study, Ms. Brofman asked if sufficient notice is provided for meetings to the working group and if it was consistent with that described for the

Aesthetic Flow Study. Mr. Anderson confirmed that sufficient notice is provided to the working group and it is consistent with that of the Aesthetic Flow Study. Mr. Anderson specified that coordination with the working group is a little more complicated for the Whitewater Boating Study due to the level of coordination needed to ensure participants with appropriate skill levels are available given the range of features within the reach (Class II through V) and the respective safety requirements, but indicated the approach is similar. Mr. Anderson indicated that the on-water assessment and contingency dates have been identified with the working group via a doodle poll.

Ms. Kelly MacVane (HDR) provided a summary of the status and progress of the study. Ms. MacVane noted the high level of coordination that has occurred with the working group to date.

5.3 Study Reports

5.3.1 Water Quality Study Report

Mr. Trested provided a summary of the status and progress of the study.

As noted above, Ms. Howatt indicated the MDEP requested habitat suitability criteria for benthic macroinvertebrates be included in the Flow Study for Aquatic Habitat Evaluation to supplement information obtained during the Outlet Stream Aquatic Habitat component of the Water Quality Study. Mr. Trested confirmed this information was included and was provided to MDEP and MDIFW.

Ms. Howatt indicated the MDEP has had discussions with RFH regarding the higher detection limits of specific parameters identified by RFH. Ms. Howatt asked for confirmation that the incorrect laboratory method was used for total phosphorus analysis and that RFH will be collecting additional data. Mr. Trested indicated the incorrect laboratory method (impacting detection limit only) was used for total phosphorus and the detection limit was 0.1 mg/L as opposed to the 0.001 mg/L detection limit required by the MDEP. Mr. Trested indicated that RFH will continue to consult with the MDEP regarding the detection limits and the collection of additional data. RFH notes that this was specified in the ISR and identified as a variance from the FERC-approved study plan in the Water Quality Study Report, and RFH continues to be committed to collection of additional data in consultation with MDEP.

Mr. Heinz asked why macroinvertebrate sampling only occurred in one sample site as opposed to two. Mr. Trested specified that, although two sites were initially requested by MDEP, it was determined only one site was needed based on consultation with MDEP to avoid influence from the ND Paper mill outflow at the lower powerhouse.

Mr. Heinz asked if the habitat within the rock falls would be studied. Mr. Trested indicated that the habitat within the Middle Dam bypassed reach would be studied during the Flow Study for Aquatic Habitat Evaluation. RFH further clarifies that the upper bypass reach, known as Rumford Falls, is steep with almost a 70-foot drop in elevation and is comprised of ledge with little habitat¹.

¹ The 1988 survey of the Upper Dam bypass reach conducted by C.T. Main, Inc. (1989), indicated that the predominantly bedrock, high gradient cascades which characterize this reach are for the most part, unsuitable to fish and invertebrates (report was filed with FERC on January 14, 2020).

5.3.2 Impoundment Bass Spawning Survey Report

Mr. Trested provided a summary of the status and progress of the study.

There were no questions or comments regarding this study.

5.3.3 Historic Architectural Survey

Ms. Cousens provided an update on the status of the study report.

Ms. Suzanne Novak (FERC) asked when RFH anticipates having the study report filed with FERC. Ms. Cousens indicated it will be filed with FERC once it has been reviewed and approved by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) and is anticipated to be included within the USR. Mr. Anderson indicated the report will be filed with FERC earlier, if possible.

6.0 Process Plan and Schedule

Mr. Browne provided a summary of the next steps in the relicensing process.

7.0 Other Comments or Questions

Mr. Heinz asked about the status of the cultural resources study at the Project. RFH is currently consulting with the MHPC towards the completion of a Phase III Archaeological Report of multiple sites located within the Project. Prior to RFH obtaining the Project, the assessments were conducted, and reports were drafted but never finalized. RFH is consulting with MHPC to complete the report over the next year. RFH notes that the referenced work is not a study being conducted for, or otherwise part of, the relicensing effort and was not part of the FERC study plan determination.

Mr. George O'Keefe (Town of Rumford) specified the Town is very pleased with the quality and quantity of the work and communication with RFH on the studies, the Town feels like it is being heard, and that a very good process is underway.

Ms. Brie Weisman (Rumford Resident) asked if the Rumford Falls Trail would be studied. Mr. Anderson confirmed it was included in the Recreation Survey and that it is also identified as a key observation point (KOP) for the Aesthetic Flow Study. Mr. O'Keefe indicated the Rumford Falls Trail is a priority for the Town.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:41 AM.