

COVER SHEET

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR THE HELLS CANYON PROJECT

Docket No. P-1971-079

Cover Letter (and other information before the Table of Contents)

DEIS



Federal Energy
Regulatory
Commission

Office of
Energy
Projects

July 2006

FERC/DEIS – 0199D

Draft Environmental Impact Statement



**Hells Canyon Hydroelectric Project
Idaho/Oregon
(FERC Project No. 1971-079)**

888 First Street N.E., Washington, DC 20426

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR HYDROPOWER LICENSE**

Hells Canyon Hydroelectric Project
FERC Project No. 1971-079

Idaho and Oregon

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Office of Energy Projects
Division of Hydropower Licensing
888 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20426

July 2006

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FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20426

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

TO THE PARTY ADDRESSED:

Attached is the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Hells Canyon Hydroelectric Project, located on the Snake River in Washington and Adams counties, Idaho, and Wallowa and Baker counties, Oregon.

This draft EIS documents the view of governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, affected Indian tribes, the public, the license applicant, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) staff. It contains evaluations on Idaho Power Company's proposal and the alternatives for licensing the Hells Canyon Project.

You are invited to file comments on the draft EIS. Any comments, conclusions, or recommendations that draw upon studies, reports, or other working papers should be supported by appropriate documentation. Your comments will be considered in the staff's preparation of the final EIS.

Comments should be filed with Magalie R. Salas, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20426. All comments must be filed within 60 days of the date that the Environmental Protection Agency notices the draft EIS in the Federal Register and should reference Project No. 1971-079. Comments may be filed electronically via the Internet in lieu of paper. The Commission strongly encourages electronic filings. See 18 CFR 385.2001(a)(1)(iii) and instructions at <http://www.ferc.gov> under the eLibrary link.

Before the Commission makes a licensing decision, it will take into account all concerns relevant to the public interest. The draft EIS will be part of the record from which the Commission will make its decision. The final EIS is expected to be issued in February 2007.

A copy of the draft EIS is available for review in the Commission's Public Reference Branch, Room 2A, located at 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20426. The draft EIS also may be viewed on the Commission's web site at <http://www.ferc.gov> under the eLibrary link. Enter the docket number excluding the last three digits in the docket number field 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.

Attachment: Draft Environmental Impact Statement

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COVER SHEET

- a. Title: Licensing for the continued operation of Idaho Power Company’s Hells Canyon Project, located on the Snake River in Washington and Adams counties, Idaho, and Wallowa and Baker counties, Oregon, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission or FERC) Project No. 1971-079.
- b. Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- c. Lead Agency: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- d. Abstract: Idaho Power Company filed an application for license with the Commission for a new license for the Hell’s Canyon Project,¹ FERC Project No. 1971, located on the Snake River in Washington and Adams counties, Idaho, and Wallowa and Baker counties, Oregon. The Hells Canyon Project consists of three developments (dams, reservoirs, and powerhouses) on the segment of the Snake River forming the border between Idaho and Oregon. The three developments are Brownlee, Oxbow, and Hells Canyon. The project affects lands included within the Payette National Forest, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, and lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.
- e. Contact:
- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Alan Mitchnick | Emily Carter |
| Federal Energy Regulatory Comm. | Federal Energy Regulatory Comm. |
| Office of Energy Projects | Office of Energy Projects |
| 888 First Street, N.E. | 888 First Street, N.E. |
| Washington, DC 20426 | Washington, DC 20426 |
| 202-502-6074 | 202-502-6512 |
- f. Transmittal: This draft environmental impact statement prepared by the Commission’s staff on the hydroelectric license application filed by the Idaho Power Company for the proposed Hells Canyon Project, FERC Project No. 1971, is being made available to the public on or about July 28, 2006, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969²

¹ Referred to in Idaho Power’s application as the Hells Canyon Complex.

² National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, amended (Pub. L. 91-190. 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, January 1, 1970, as amended by Pub. L. 94-52, July 3, 1975, Pub. L. 94-83, August 9, 1975, and Pub. L. 97-258, §4(b), September 13, 1982).

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FOREWORD

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission), pursuant to the Federal Power Act (FPA)³ and the U.S. Department of Energy Organization Act⁴ is authorized to issue licenses for up to 50 years for the construction and operation of non-federal hydroelectric development subject to its jurisdiction, on the necessary conditions:

That the project...shall be such as in the judgment of the Commission will be best adapted to a comprehensive plan for improving or developing a waterway or waterways for the use or benefit of interstate or foreign commerce, for the improvement and utilization of water-power development, for the adequate protection, mitigation, and enhancement of fish and wildlife (including related spawning grounds and habitat), and for other beneficial public uses, including irrigation, flood control, water supply, and recreational and other purposes referred to in Section 4(e)...⁵

The Commission may require such other conditions not inconsistent with the FPA as may be found necessary to provide for the various public interests to be served by the project.⁶ Compliance with such conditions during the licensing period is required. The Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure allow any person objecting to a licensee's compliance or noncompliance with such conditions to file a complaint noting the basis for such objection for the Commission's consideration.⁷

³ 16 U.S.C. § 791(a)-825r, as amended by the Electric Consumers Protection Act of 1986, Public Law 99-495 (1986); the Energy Policy Act of 1992, Public Law 102-486 (1992); and the Energy Policy Act of 2005, Public Law 109-58 (2005).

⁴ Public Law 95-91, 91 Stat. 556 (1977).

⁵ 16 U.S.C. § 803(a).

⁶ 16 U.S.C. § 803(g).

⁷ 18 C.F.R. § 385.206 (1987).

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