

148 FERC ¶ 62,061
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Wisconsin Public Service Corporation

Project Nos. 2525-074, 2595-100,
2522-096, 2546-088,
2560-073, and 2581-
055

ORDER APPROVING PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE MONITORING PLAN PURSUANT
TO THE UPDATED COMPREHENSIVE LAND AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
PLAN

(Issued July 21, 2014)

1. On December 4, 2013, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS) filed documentation of purple loosestrife monitoring for the Peshtigo (FERC No. 2581) and Potato Rapids (FERC No. 2560) Hydroelectric Projects and a purple loosestrife monitoring plan (monitoring plan) for the Peshtigo Hydroelectric Project pursuant to ordering paragraph (B) of the June 12, 2012 Order Modifying and Approving Updated Comprehensive Land and Wildlife Management Plan (CLWMP).¹ The CLWMP and its updates are required by articles 412, 409, 410, 411, 409, and 408 of Caldron Falls (FERC No. 2525),² High Falls (FERC No. 2595),³ Johnson Falls (FERC No. 2522),⁴ Sandstone Rapids (FERC No. 2546),⁵ Potato Rapids,⁶ and Peshtigo⁷ Hydroelectric Project licenses, respectively, issued June 26, 1997. The projects are located on the Peshtigo River in Marinette County, Wisconsin. The Caldron Falls Hydroelectric Project is also partially located in Oconto County, Wisconsin.

¹ See 139 FERC ¶ 62,214.

² See Order Issuing New License (79 FERC ¶ 62, 219).

³ See Order Issuing New License (79 FERC ¶ 62, 223).

⁴ See Order Issuing New License (79 FERC ¶ 62, 222).

⁵ See Order Issuing New License (79 FERC ¶ 62, 221).

⁶ See Order Issuing Subsequent License (79 FERC ¶ 62, 218).

⁷ See Order Issuing Subsequent License (79 FERC ¶ 62, 220).

BACKGROUND

2. Paragraph (B) of the June 12 order requires WPS to continue to implement the provisions of the approved 2009 supplement to the Comprehensive Land and Wildlife Management Plan (supplemental plan) for purple loosestrife control at the Peshtigo Project through 2013. The 2009 supplemental plan requires WPS to release *Galerucella* sp. Beetles (beetles) as a biological control measure, for five years, or until each purple loosestrife colony has an established beetle population, and conduct annual surveys of the entire project for five years.⁸ Upon completion of the implementation cycle for 2013, WPS, based on the five year survey results, is required to determine if the spread of purple loosestrife is controlled at the Peshtigo Project and provide its recommendation(s), in accordance with the approved 2009 supplemental plan, by either reducing the monitoring frequency to every three years if the spread is controlled, or, if the spread is not controlled, reinitiating agency consultation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Wisconsin Natural Resources) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (US Fish and Wildlife) to determine other control measures.

3. By September 30, 2013, WPS was required to file its annual report with Wisconsin Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife, including a summary conclusion, based on the five years of data, regarding the control of the spread of purple loosestrife at the Peshtigo Project and its resulting action (i.e., either reduction to an every three year monitoring schedule or the need to reinitiate consultation to determine other control measures). By December 31, 2013, WPS is required to file, for Commission approval, documentation of submittal of the annual report to Wisconsin Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife, its purple loosestrife monitoring schedule for the Peshtigo Project with any revisions to the purple loosestrife control plan, documentation of agency consultation, including comments and recommendations, and how those comments are accommodated by the plan. If WPS does not adopt a recommendation, the filing should include WPS' reasons, based on project-specific information.

4. In accordance with the approved CLWMP, WPS is to monitor purple loosestrife at the Potato Rapids Project site annually through 2014. If purple loosestrife is no longer observed during the 2014 survey, WPS would survey the Potato Rapids Project every three years, in conjunction with the Eurasian Water Milfoil survey.

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE ANNUAL and FIVE-YEAR MONITORING RESULTS

5. The December 4 filing indicates that WPS released on July 17, 2013 approximately 15,000 beetles at the two largest infested purple loosestrife colonies (#3

⁸ See Order Approving Supplement to Comprehensive Land and Wildlife Management Plan (128 FERC ¶ 62,073), issued July 30, 2009.

and #17) and pulled about 20 outlying purple loosestrife plants from colony #17 at the Peshtigo Project. WPS released an additional 10,000 beetles and pulled all purple loosestrife plants at colony #25 on July 25, 2013. These beetles were also released at colonies #3 and #29. Results of the purple loosestrife survey at the Peshtigo Project indicate that the colonies have been reduced from 13 to 8 and no new colonies were observed in 2013. As in 2011 and 2012, beetle feeding was observed at every remaining purple loosestrife colony, and plant vigor was reduced from an average of 7.6 in 2012 to 7.25 in 2013.⁹

6. WPS completed its five-year monitoring protocol in 2013. Since 2009, WPS released approximately 63,000 beetles at the Peshtigo Project, resulting in the elimination of 16 purple loosestrife colonies and the control of the remaining 8 colonies. Plant vigor has also reduced from an average of 11.32 for 25 purple loosestrife colonies in 2009 to 7.32 for the remaining 8 colonies in 2013. WPS indicates that purple loosestrife is controlled at the Peshtigo Project and proposes to reduce the monitoring of purple loosestrife to every three years in conjunction with its Eurasian Water Milfoil survey with the next survey occurring in 2014.

7. In 2011, WPS found purple loosestrife at the Potato Rapids Project; the colony was hand pulled. As in 2012, no signs of purple loosestrife were observed at the Potato Rapids Project in 2013. WPS would monitor purple loosestrife in 2014, and if not observed, monitor in conjunction with the Eurasian Water Milfoil survey every three years.

PROPOSED MONITORING PLAN

8. The proposed monitoring plan for the Peshtigo Project would require WPS to conduct a shoreline survey of the impoundments, all water bodies, and all wetlands that occur on WPS property within the project boundary and record the relative density and abundance of purple loosestrife. The survey would be completed in either July or August (depending on when the plants are in bloom) of every third year beginning in 2014, in conjunction with the Eurasian water milfoil survey. Survey results would be displayed on a map of the total project area to Wisconsin Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife by September 30 every year a survey is completed. Documentation of submittal to the agencies would be filed with the Commission by December 31 of a survey year.

⁹ WPS states that the plant vigor measurement system was established to account for purple loosestrife plant health and is an overall combined score of measurable factors including colony size, plant height, plant flowering, and beetle feeding. Each category is given a score based on the observed plant conditions. The score for each category is added together to provide an overall score for the total plant vigor. A higher score indicates that a plant is in good health while a lower score indicates poor health.

9. Relative populations of purple loosestrife would be indicated based on (1) small colonies of 1 – 5 plants; (2) medium colonies of 6 – 50 plants, and (3) dense colonies of more than 50 plants. WPS would survey existing colonies for signs of beetle feeding, and if signs of beetle feeding are not observed, WPS would consult with Wisconsin Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife to determine if a beetle release or other type of control is warranted. Public awareness of purple loosestrife would be increased by displaying invasive species signage, supplied by Wisconsin Natural Resources, at public access areas in the project boundary.

AGENCY CONSULTATION

10. WPS provided a draft of the purple loosestrife monitoring results and the monitoring plan to Wisconsin Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife on September 12, 2013. By letter dated October 2, 2013, Wisconsin Natural Resources concurred with the proposed monitoring plan. No comments were received from US Fish and Wildlife.

DISCUSSION

11. WPS completed the fifth year of purple loosestrife monitoring at the Peshtigo Project as required in its approved 2009 CLWMP supplemental plan. WPS has concluded that the spread of purple loosestrife at the project is controlled and proposes to survey every three years, in conjunction with its Eurasian water milfoil survey, beginning in 2014. WPS has incorporated the every three year schedule and the use of beetles (or other control methods as warranted after agency consultation) in its proposed monitoring plan for the Peshtigo Project. The agencies concurred with the proposed monitoring plan.

12. The annual and five-year monitoring results and proposed monitoring plan fulfill the requirements of paragraph (B) of the June 12 order. Further, the proposed survey methods, schedule, documentation of survey results, consultation, and report dissemination to the consulting agencies and Commission outlined in the monitoring plan for the Peshtigo Project align with the purple loosestrife monitoring plan for the Peshtigo River Hydroelectric Projects approved in the updated CLWMP. The proposed monitoring plan ensures that purple loosestrife is monitored at the Peshtigo Project concurrent with the other five projects on a regular schedule and provides measures for control and agency consultation. The monitoring plan for the Peshtigo Project should be approved and incorporated into the purple loosestrife monitoring plan for the Peshtigo River Hydroelectric Projects (FERC Nos. 2525, 2595, 2522, 2546, 2560, and 2581) approved in the updated CLWMP.

The Director orders:

(A) Wisconsin Public Service Corporation's purple loosestrife monitoring plan for the Peshtigo Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2581) pursuant to the updated comprehensive land and wildlife management plan for the Peshtigo River Hydroelectric

Project Nos. 2525-074 et al.

5

Projects (FERC Nos. 2525, 2595, 2522, 2546, 2560, and 2581), filed on December 4, 2013, is approved.

(B) This order constitutes final agency action. Any party may file a request for rehearing of this order within 30 days from the date of its issuance, as provided in section 313(a) of the FPA, 16 U.S.C. § 825*l* (2012), and the Commission's regulations at 18 C.F.R. § 385.713 (2014). The filing of a request for rehearing does not operate as a stay of the effective date of this order, or of any other date specified in this order. The licensee's failure to file a request for rehearing shall constitute acceptance of this order.

Robert J. Fletcher
Chief, Land Resources Branch
Division of Hydropower
Administration and Compliance

Document Content(s)

P-2525-074.DOC.....1-5