

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 125 FERC ¶ 62,080
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Wisconsin Public Service Corporation

Project No. 1999-054

ORDER AMENDING PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE MONITORING PLAN

(Issued October 23, 2008)

On December 10, 2007, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (licensee) filed a request to amend its order approving purple loosestrife monitoring plan, pursuant to article 408 (1997 Order)¹ of the license for the Wausau Project.² The Wausau Project is located on the Wisconsin River in Marathon County, Wisconsin.

BACKGROUND

The approved monitoring plan requires the licensee to monitor for purple loosestrife at the project each year, beginning in 1997, in June or July when the plants are in bloom. The results of the monitoring surveys are required to be shown on a map of the project area and submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Commission by October 31 every second year. In addition, the approved plan requires the licensee to remove small colonies (1 to 5 plants) of purple loosestrife on lands owned by the licensee and/or below the project reservoir's high water mark. The licensee is also to make available to the public copies of WDNR's purple loosestrife pamphlet, if complimentary copies are provided to the licensee. Lastly, the approved plan states that if during the term of license, the FWS and the WDNR deem it necessary to control or eliminate purple loosestrife, the licensee is required to cooperate in this measure.

By letter dated April 24, 2007, the Commission sent a letter to the licensee stating that based on survey findings (especially in 2005 and 2006) and pursuant to the 1997 Order approving the plan, it recommends that the licensee consult with the resource agencies on effective control measures and that the licensee file a proposed control plan, along with agency comments, with the Commission by December 31, 2008.

¹ See 80 FERC ¶ 62,029 (issued July 14, 1997).

² See Order Issuing New License, 76 FERC ¶ 61,056 (issued July 18, 1996).

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LICENSEE'S PROPOSAL

The licensee states that the objective of the control plan is to control the spread of purple loosestrife. Surveys will continue annually under the methods approved in 1997 for at least the next six years. In summary, the licensee proposes that control methods consist of separating the project area into five sections and implementing biological controls. The licensee proposes releasing *Galerucella* beetles into one section at a time until a release is completed for each of the five individual sections. The licensee proposes to commence releasing the beetles in the spring/summer of 2008 and for the next five years, thereafter.

The licensee proposes that, if after six years of surveys under the proposed control measures, a decrease in purple loosestrife cluster size and overall population is observed, the licensee would reduce the frequency of purple loosestrife surveys from annually to once every five years. If a decrease is not observed, the licensee proposes to then consult with the WDNR and the FWS on an appropriate future monitoring schedule.

The licensee proposes to provide annual updates on *Galerucella* beetle release sites and purple loosestrife populations for the next six years to the WDNR, FWS, and the Commission no later than October 31, each year. The licensee proposes that if a decrease in purple loosestrife size and overall population is observed after six years of control measures, the licensee will provide updates to the WDNR, FWS, and Commission once every five years. If a decrease is not observed, the licensee will then consult with the WDNR and FWS on an appropriate future documentation schedule. The licensee proposes to ensure that noxious plant informational signs and/or informational pamphlets are placed at all public access areas near the Wausau project.

AGENCY CONSULTATION

By letters dated October 24, 2007, the licensee provided a copy of its proposed control plan and requested comments on the control plan from the FWS and the WDNR. No comments were received from the resource agencies.

CONCLUSIONS

We recommend that the licensee file annual purple loosestrife monitoring results and the results of the implementation of the *Galerucella* beetle control efforts with the WDNR and the FWS by October 31 each year, starting in 2009. The licensee should file the annual results, including agency comments with the Commission by December 15 each year, starting 2009, allowing the resource agencies 30 days to comment on each report. After six years of control data have been collected (2009-2014), the licensee should file a summary of the data and its recommendation, after consulting with the resource agencies, on the schedule for conducting and reporting future purple loosestrife surveys with the

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Commission. After review of the sixth report filed with the Commission on December 15, 2014, the Commission will then determine the schedule for conducting and filing future purple loosestrife monitoring and control reports.

In summary, the licensee's proposed purple loosestrife control plan enhances the existing monitoring plan and satisfies the intent of license article 408. Implementation of the proposed control plan should control the spread of noxious populations of existing purple loosestrife at the Wausau Project. For these reasons, the monitoring plan should be amended to include the proposed control plan.

The Director orders:

(A) The purple loosestrife monitoring plan, approved on July 14, 1997, is amended to include the licensee's control plan filed on December 10, 2007.

(B) The licensee shall file annual purple loosestrife monitoring results and the results of the implementation of the *Galerucella* beetle control efforts with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by October 31 each year, starting in 2009. The licensee shall file the annual results, including agency comments with the Commission by December 15 each year, starting 2009, allowing the resource agencies 30 days to comment on each report. After six years of control data have been collected (2009-2014), the licensee shall file a summary of the data and its recommendation, after consulting with the resource agencies, on the schedule for conducting and reporting future purple loosestrife surveys with the Commission. After review of the sixth report filed with the Commission on December 15, 2014, the Commission will determine the schedule for conducting and filing future purple loosestrife monitoring and control reports.

(C) This order constitutes final agency action. Requests for rehearing by the Commission may be filed within 30 days of the date of issuance of this order, pursuant to 18 CFR § 385.713.

George H. Taylor
Chief, Biological Resources Branch
Division of Hydropower Administration
and Compliance

Document Content(s)

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