

Via US Express Mail: EL826316070

(Letter mailed to participants list  
by regular mail)

July 18, 2002

The Honorable Magalie R. Salas  
Secretary  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Avenue NE  
Washington, DC 20426

**Re: Cooper Lake Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2170):  
Follow-up from July 9-10 Joint Meeting, and Revised Schedule for Development of  
Draft Study Plans**

Dear Cooper Lake Project Relicensing Participants:

Chugach extends its thanks to all of you who attended the joint meeting and site visit, held in Cooper Landing on July 9 and 10. The meeting portions of this session, which took place during the morning of July 9 and early afternoon of July 10, were recorded on audio tape, and transcripts will be made available to any participant upon request. In addition, a brief written summary of the meeting and site visit will be prepared and distributed for review within the next two weeks. The final version of these meeting notes will be posted on the relicensing website ([www.chugach.com/relicensing](http://www.chugach.com/relicensing)).

The purpose of the joint agency/public meeting was to provide an opportunity for participants to comment verbally on the Initial Consultation Package (ICP), which was issued on June 7. At both the morning meeting session on July 9 and the afternoon session on July 10, several agencies reaffirmed their desire to have Chugach collect field data this year to support study planning for 2003, as well as concern that Chugach had not communicated sufficient details regarding its plans for such preliminary data-collection efforts or for more full-fledged studies to be conducted during the balance of the relicensing. The U.S. Forest Service in particular expressed concern that without detailed study plans, it would be difficult for agencies to provide informed comment letters (including requests for studies and preferences for specific methodologies) by the September 9 deadline for written comments on the ICP. The Forest Service also indicated that it would prefer to have Stage 1 consultation extended to encompass finalization of study plans.

Chugach appreciates the agencies' willingness to share these concerns openly. In response to the input received at this meeting, Chugach has developed a revised schedule that we hope will help to provide sufficient information regarding planned 2002 data-collection efforts to ensure that there is a high level of comfort among participants regarding the appropriateness of these efforts. Chugach is also aiming to expedite the schedule for development of draft study plans for 2003 environmental studies, with a target of having these drafts out for participant review by mid-October. The intent is that study plans can be reviewed and discussed with participants at an early to mid-November workshop, revised as needed, and finalized by year end.

To meet this new proposed schedule, Chugach will begin work immediately on a detailed description of all data-collection plans for 2002, as well as an outline of plans for studies to be conducted in 2003. Chugach's resource experts on the HDR Alaska team will consult with agency experts on an individual basis as needed regarding the specifics of these efforts. Our target is to issue a "Preliminary Study Concepts and 2002 Data Collection Methods" document by early August, in time to help inform participants of our plans so they may be considered in any comments participants may wish to make on planned studies in the September 9 comment letters.

Following distribution of this document, the Chugach team will begin work on full draft study plans for studies to be conducted in 2003, continuing direct consultation among Chugach and agency experts as needed and taking into account the comments received in the September 9 letters. The target is to issue the draft study plans in mid-October for review by the participants. The study plans will be discussed with participants at the proposed workshop in November. Based on review comments and discussion at the workshop, Chugach will work to finalize the study plans by the end of December.

Chugach would like to emphasize the importance to the overall relicensing studies schedule of receiving agencies' comments by the September 9 deadline (i.e., 60 days following the July site visit). The purpose of these comment letters is to provide written comments on the ICP and, based on the existing information presented in the ICP, identify information gaps and request studies that will be necessary to address each agency's resource issues and objectives pertaining to the relicensing. Thus, these comment letters will greatly help Chugach determine whether its proposed studies will sufficiently address the resource issues, or whether additional studies may be needed, and will help in selection of specific study methodologies to be incorporated into the study plans.

Regarding the Forest Service's requested extension of Stage 1 consultation past September 9, Chugach reiterates that the prerogative for approving such an extension lies solely with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). However, once the comment letters are received in early September, Chugach will support a request to FERC for a 60-day extension of Stage 1, as provided in FERC's regulations. This will provide Chugach with the timely input it needs to inform its preparation of draft study plans by mid-October and should also allow sufficient time for comments on the draft study plans to be developed within the extended Stage 1.

Thanks again to everyone for their attendance and participation in the joint meeting and site visit. We look forward to continuing discussions with you during the next several weeks regarding 2002 and 2003 research efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Lovas".

Thomas A. Lovas  
Manager, System Development and Corporate Planning  
Cooper Lake Relicensing Project Manager