

Wallowa Falls Hydroelectric Project

FERC Project No. P-308

Revised Study Plans – Aesthetics and Visual Resources

December 2011

Prepared by:

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Hydro Resources
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For Public Review

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

PacifiCorp Energy (PacifiCorp) plans to file an application for new license for the Wallowa Falls Hydroelectric Project (Project), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Project No. P-308, on the East Fork Wallowa River, West Fork Wallowa River and Royal Purple Creek in Wallowa County, Oregon. The current license will expire on February 28, 2016. The Project has a generation capacity of 1,100 kilowatts and is located on private land owned by PacifiCorp and federal lands managed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

PacifiCorp filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) and the associated Pre-Application Document (PAD) to commence the FERC Integrated Relicensing Process of the Project on February 22, 2011. As part of the FERC Integrated Relicensing Process, prospective license applicants are required to submit relevant resource study plans (18 CFR 5.11). This includes a study of aesthetics and visual resources within and adjacent to the Project boundary.

PacifiCorp proposes to conduct an Aesthetics and Visual Resources Study to meet FERC licensing requirements. The study will include the following 2 components: 1) an inventory of existing aesthetic and scenic conditions due to the Project, 2) an evaluation of Project consistency with existing aesthetic designations, plans or management objectives.

2.0 STUDY DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Per 18 CFR §5.11(d)(1), this section describes the goal and objectives of the study and the information to be obtained. FERC guidelines identify the requirement to assess project affects to aesthetic resources as part of a license application. The goal of this study is to describe existing aesthetic and visual conditions and develop additional information to support a new FERC license application for continued future operation of the Project.

The study has two principal objectives:

- Document the existing aesthetic and visual character of the Project facilities.
- Evaluate the effect of Project features and operations within the context of the local landscape character and consistency with applicable land management planning goals for aesthetic and visual resources.

3.0 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GOALS

Per 18 CFR §5.11(d)(2), this section describes resource management goals of the two agencies (U.S. Forest Service and Wallowa County) with jurisdiction over aesthetic and visual resources in the Project vicinity.

3.1 Wallowa Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

The current Wallowa Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) became final in 1990. A revised plan is currently being developed under the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision which covers the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman

National Forests collectively. The revised plan is scheduled to be released for public review and comment in 2011 with a final decision expected in 2012.

Chapter 4, Forest Management Direction, of the current Forest Plan (USFS. 1990) identifies the following landscape management goal or direction: “To manage all National Forest Lands to obtain the highest possible quality commensurate with other appropriate public uses costs and benefits.”

Additionally, standards and guidelines supporting this goal are established through Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) that are identified for a particular area of the forest. The VQO for the portion of the Project on National Forest land is Retention-Middle Ground meaning the general objective is to retain the existing visual character, where the maximum viewable area disturbed at any one time should not exceed 14 percent of any viewshed.

3.2 Wallowa County Plan

The current Wallowa County Comprehensive Plan was published in 2010 (Wallowa County Planning Department. 2010). The plan outlines the general planning process for Wallowa County and provides general direction for land uses and future land development. The plan does not identify specific aesthetic or visual goals for the Project area.

4.0 EXISTING INFORMATION

Per 18 CFR §5.11(d)(3), this section describes existing information on aesthetic and scenic conditions at the Project, and the need for additional information.

Built in 1921, the Project facilities have coexisted with their surroundings for decades, and so to some degree have become part of the local landscape character. The Wallowa Falls Project is located in a heavily forested mountainous area. Local topography has been shaped largely by glaciation. The visual character of this area is dominated by the conifer forest breaking into high elevation rock outcrops and talus slopes on steep canyon sides. This character is modified somewhat by the development of access roads, the Project facilities, trails, parking areas, recreational homes, park facilities and other recreational facilities near the Project. Photos showing the general visual character and setting of the Project facilities are provided in Appendix C of the Pre-Application Document (PacifiCorp. 2011).

Noise associated with recreational activities in this area, as well as operation of the Project generator, alter the area's aesthetic characteristics. In a comment letter to FERC dated June 23, 2011 the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) noted that noise from the powerhouse is apparent for at least a mile and the USFS considers this a disruption to Forest users. The USFS also noted that Project features including the dam, spillway catwalk, forebay structure and pipeline may be considered a visual intrusion to trail users.

Additional information needs for aesthetic and visual resources include the following:

- A systematic photo-documentation of the Project facilities and Project bypass reach under a range of flow conditions.

- Potential aesthetic affects of powerhouse generator noise to visitors to the area.
- Additional consultation with Wallowa-Whitman National Forest staff and Wallowa County Planning Department staff on aesthetic and scenic management goals and objectives applicable to the Project.
- Wallowa-Whitman National Forest staff will also be consulted to discuss how visual/scenery and noise are associated with the VQOs and Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) designations that have been assigned to the USFS lands near the Project in the current Forest Plan. This will assist in determining Project consistency with the directives of the Forest Plan.

5.0 NEXUS TO PROJECT

Per 18 CFR §5.11(d)(4), this section will describe any nexus between Project operations and effects on aesthetic and visual resources.

The Project has potential direct and indirect effects on aesthetic and visual resources within and adjacent to the Project boundary and in the affected reach of the river below the dam. These effects include the visibility of Project facilities within the surrounding landscape, sound from the Project powerhouse and diversion of water from the East Fork Wallowa River.

6.0 STUDY AREA

This section will introduce the Study Area pertinent to the specific resource area.

The Study Area consists of lands, Project facilities and waters within and adjacent to the Project boundary including the bypass reach.

7.0 METHODS

Per 18 CFR §5.11(b)(1) and §5.11(d)(5), this section provides a detailed description of the proposed study methodology, including data collection and analysis techniques, or objectively quantified information, sampling strategy, and a schedule including appropriate field season(s) and the duration.

PacifiCorp will describe the visual characteristics of the Project area using existing information supplemented with data collected during site visits. Color photographs will be taken of each of the Project facilities (approximately 10) from key locations to document visual resources. Field observations and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic quadrangle maps will be used to define the viewshed of each of the Project facilities. Several key observation points (KOPs) in the Project area will be established to characterize representative viewing conditions and viewer types for each of the Project facilities. KOPs will be developed in consultation with Wallowa-Whitman National Forest staff. Included in the KOPs will be viewpoints selected because of their importance to recreational users. It is anticipated that as per National Park Service's suggestion in the June, 20, 2011 comment on the Pre-Application Document (PAD) and Scoping Document, opportunities for scenic viewpoints will be examined as part of this study (NPS, 2011). This effort will be made in consultation with Wallowa-Whitman National Forest staff.

No visual preference survey is proposed. The focus of this analysis will be on PacifiCorp's Project facilities.

A question regarding the affect of sound from the Project powerhouse on campers at Pacific Park will be included in the recreation visitor survey proposed in the recreation study plan for Pacific Park.

Assessment of the visual compatibility of the Project facilities with the existing landscape will be based on the USFS Visual Management System and the Visual Quality Objectives the USFS has established for the area. The effects of the facilities on existing visual conditions will be evaluated from identified KOPs. Areas where existing Project facilities are inconsistent with scenic values will be identified.

The visual resource study methods involve three subtasks described below:

- Identify applicable goals for aesthetic and visual quality;
- Document and describe the aesthetic characteristics of the Project area; and
- Review potential conflicts with existing aesthetic/visual management goals.

7.1 Identify Applicable Goals for Aesthetic and Visual Quality

Applicable aesthetic and visual quality goals of relevant management plans including the Forest Plan and associated plans will be identified and reviewed for applicability to the Project area. This task may require additional consultation with Wallowa-Whitman National Forest staff and Wallowa County Planning Department staff on aesthetic and visual management goals and objectives applicable to the Project.

7.2 Document and Describe the Aesthetic Characteristics of the Project Area

This step will be based on existing published data along with visitor survey data on the affects of sound from the powerhouse to visitors and photo-documentation taken at approximately five to 10 key observation points (KOPs). The visitor survey methods are described in the Recreation Study Plan. KOPs will be identified in consultation with appropriate planning agencies, and from a review of information about recreation users. The KOPs will include at least two locations within the Project bypass reach on the East Fork Wallowa River. At these locations photographs will be taken during approximately high, average, and low flow periods, based on a review of available hydrologic information. If appropriate and useful, notes will be included in the flow observations that describe water conditions from an aesthetic perspective (turbidity, color, etc). These observations will be coordinated with findings from water quality studies.

7.3 Review Potential Conflicts with Existing Aesthetic/Visual Management Goals

This subtask will evaluate whether existing and proposed Project facilities, operations, and flow regimes are consistent with applicable visual and aesthetic management goals of relevant plans including any for sound or noise. In addition enhancement measures may be suggested, if appropriate and effective in reducing potential Forest Plan inconsistencies associated with Project facilities, operations and flow regimes.

8.0 PROGRESS REPORTING

Per 18 CFR §5.11(b)(3), this section describes provisions for periodic progress reports, including the manner and extent to which information will be shared; and the time allotted for technical review of the analysis and results.

A study progress meeting will be held in October of 2012. A study progress report (draft Technical Report) will be made available for 30 day stakeholder review and comment in November, 2012. Stakeholder comments will be addressed in the initial study report. The initial study report will be made available for review in mid January, 2013; followed by an initial study report meeting in late January, 2013.

9.0 FINAL PRODUCT

A final Technical Report will be made available for stakeholder review in June, 2013. The final Technical Report will include descriptive text, maps, photographs, and data tables and will describe study objectives, methods, and the final results of the study. This report will discuss any Project effects on aesthetic and visual resources and any Project inconsistencies with applicable visual and aesthetic management goals.

10.0 SCHEDULE

Per 18 CFR §5.11(b)(2), the schedule for conducting the study is provided in Table 10.0-1 below.

Table 10.0-1 Aesthetics and Visual Study Schedule

Component	Completion Date
Identify Applicable Goals for Aesthetic and Visual Quality	February-May 2012
Document and Describe Aesthetic Characteristics of the Project Area	May-August 2012
Review of Potential Conflicts With Existing Aesthetic\Visual Management Goals	August September 2012
Study Progress Meeting	October 2012
Study Progress Report	November 2012
Initial Study Report filed with FERC	January 2013
Initial Study Report meeting	January 2013
Meeting Summary filed with FERC	February 2013
Final Technical Report filed with FERC	June 2013*

* Assumes one season of data collection.

11.0 LEVEL OF EFFORT AND COST

Per 18 CFR §5.11(d)(6), the anticipated level of effort and cost are provided in Table 11.0-1 below.

Table 11.0-1 Anticipated Level of Effort and Costs for Aesthetics and Visual Resources Study

Activity	Labor	Per-Diem	Materials and Equipment	Total
Identify Applicable Goals	\$4,000	\$0	\$0	\$4,000
Document and Describe Aesthetic Characteristics	\$6,000	\$1,200	\$0	\$7,200
Review of Potential Conflicts with Goals	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000
Reporting and Meetings	\$1,800	\$0	\$0	\$1,800
Total	\$13,800	\$1,200	\$0	\$15,000

12.0 REFERENCES

National Park Service, 2011. Letter to the Federal Regulatory Commission with comments in response to the Notice of Intent to File and Application for a New License, Pre-Application Document (PAD) and Scoping Document Availability. June 20, 2011. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Seattle, Washington.

PacifiCorp. 2011. Wallowa Falls Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. P-308, Pre-Application Document. February, 2011. On the web at:
<http://www.pacificorp.com/es/hydro/hl/wf.html#>

USFS. 1990. Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. U.S. Forest Service. Baker City, Oregon.

Wallowa County Planning Department. No date. Wallowa County Comprehensive Plan. On the web at:
http://www.co.wallowa.or.us/community_development/land_use_planning/index.html