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DEP Receives Federal License Extension for Proposed Cannonsville Hydroelectric Facility

Two-year extension will allow DEP to reexamine feasibility of proposed hydroelectric plant

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on Wednesday announced that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has granted a two-year extension of its license to build a hydroelectric facility on the release works at Cannonsville Reservoir. The license originally required DEP to begin construction of the facility next month. The City will use the additional time to reassess the design assumptions that yielded cost and revenue estimates for the power plant and to reevaluate whether, based on additional technical information, the project can be constructed in a manner that is compatible with the highest standards of dam safety. In addition to the extension provided by FERC, the City also continues to pursue a longer postponement through federal legislation.

“The City is pleased that FERC has extended its license for the proposed Cannonsville hydroelectric facility, in effect recognizing that this proposal requires a new analysis to ensure the power plant is compatible with dam safety,” **DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd** said. “DEP will continue to update our downstream neighbors, watershed residents, and the general public as we make progress on this engineering study and other efforts related to the hydroelectric project.”

New York City received the two-year extension from FERC on April 21. Its license to build the hydroelectric facility at Cannonsville Reservoir previously required construction to start by May 13, 2016. The City has also been working with members of Congress to pass federal legislation that would postpone the project by eight years. Bills that include the longer postponement are still under consideration by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. DEP has pursued a longer postponement because it will likely take longer than two years to hire expert engineers and perform the new analysis. The additional feasibility study was also recommended by an expert Board of Consultants (BOC) that was formed specifically for the project as part of a FERC requirement. The BOC includes expert engineers from across the United States who reviewed data and geotechnical information after the drilling incident last summer.


Background

In July 2015, DEP responded to a report of cloudy water being discharged into the West Branch Delaware River, just downstream of Cannonsville Dam. The discharge was discovered as workers drilled test borings to support the design and construction of the hydroelectric facility that was planned for the site. An investigation found that the drilling released groundwater under natural pressure, known as an artesian condition, several dozen feet below the surface. As the pressurized groundwater flowed upward it also carried sediment into the river. At

More Information

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