

ELK RAPIDS HYDROELECTRIC DAM RELICENSING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why am I getting a certified letter from Antrim County?

As the licensee and owner of the dam, Antrim County is required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to notify any property owner adjacent to the Project Boundary by Certified Mail that the application for relicensing has been submitted. Since the Project Boundary of the Elk Rapids Hydroelectric Dam is defined as the shoreline of Elk and Skegemog Lakes (the level of the reservoir created by the dam), you have been identified as one of those property owners.

What does it mean to “relicense” the dam?

Although the current dam dates back to the early 20th Century, the hydroelectric equipment was decommissioned around 1950. After the oil crisis of the 1970s, Antrim County was encouraged by the Department of Energy to reinstall hydroelectric generation equipment in the dam in 1981. Like all hydroelectric dams, the Elk Rapids facility was awarded a license by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The current license is due to expire at the end of 2014 and without the license the hydroelectric will not be allowed to continue operation. Antrim County has elected to apply to renew the license. If the license is granted, it will allow the hydro to operate for about 35 years into the future.

What are the licensing requirements?

In the licensing process, FERC examines many different aspects of hydroelectric operations: engineering, public safety, socio-economic impact, water quality, fish and aquatic resources, wildlife and botanical resources, rare and endangered species, recreation and land use, waterways and public access, esthetic resources, cultural resources, tribal resources, geological resources, environmental impact, and many more sub categories. As the license applicant, Antrim County is required to investigate and report on all these subjects in the formal application. Upon review, FERC may also order further study. The licensing process takes approximately 5 years, at the end of which it may approve or deny the license. The Elk Rapids Hydroelectric licensing process is now in its 3rd year. In 2010, the County filed the “pre-application” and stated it’s intent to relicense. The certified mailing is one of the public notification requirements when Antrim County filed the final application in December of 2012.

Why is Antrim County determined to relicense the dam?

Dams are in need of constant maintenance to stay in good working order. The Elk Rapids Hydroelectric facility generates a modest revenue stream that can help pay for necessary repairs. Keeping the dam in compliance with the terms of the FERC license sets a high standard for upkeep and safety, and daily operation keeps the dam under constant surveillance. All these factors support the principal goal: the County’s resolve to protect the dam as critical

infrastructure of the economy and natural resources of our community.

What will happen if the new license is granted?

The Elk Rapids Hydroelectric Dam will continue to be operated as it is today. All the operation parameters of the current license will be extended into the future, including maintaining the lake level in accordance with the order by the circuit court. The relicensing is just an extension of the status quo and does not convey the County any new or additional authority.

What would happen if the new license is not granted?

Antrim County would continue to own, maintain and operate the dam. However, FERC mandates that all power sales cease and the generating equipment must be removed from the facility. Therefore, the full cost of operating and maintaining the dam would fall to the taxpayers of Antrim County.

This FAQ page was prepared by the Antrim County Operator of Dams, Mark Stone. For background information about the Elk Rapids Hydroelectric Dam and the Operator of Dams, visit: www.antrimdraincommissioner.com