

FERC axes permit for 150-MW Nevada hydro project on a Superfund site

FERC staff had issued the preliminary permit this past October

01/23/2015 by Barry Cassell

On Jan. 22, the members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission reversed an October 2014 decision to issue a preliminary permit for a 150-MW pumped storage hydropower project in Nevada.

On Oct. 29, 2014, commission staff issued a preliminary permit to **Green Energy Storage Corp.** for the proposed Weed Heights Pumped Storage Project, to be located off-stream near the town of Yerington in Lyon County, Nevada. On Nov. 26, 2014, **Singatse Peak Services LLC** (SPS) filed a request for rehearing of the Oct. 29 order.

The preliminary permit would have allowed Green Energy study the feasibility of this 150-MW closed loop pumped storage project, which would utilize the 775 feet of head between a proposed upper reservoir and the former Anaconda open pit copper mine. The transmission lines would be located on federal lands, including lands managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The abandoned mine is part of the Anaconda Mine Superfund site, which covers more than 3,400 acres in Lyon County.

"Based on the fact that the proposed project area is a Superfund site, the Commission has decided to rescind Green Energy's preliminary permit," said the Jan. 22 order. "Although the October 29 Order states that the potential conflict created by a [Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980] investigation is a premature concern at the preliminary permit stage, we do not think it is prudent to issue a permit for a site undergoing an indefinite cleanup process. The CERCLA investigation and remediation process will take many years to complete, and our prior experience with Superfund sites is that they essentially preclude project development. Given the size and complexity of the contaminated site, and the fact the Superfund process is still at a relatively early stage, it seems highly unlikely that Green Energy would be able to perform any site-specific studies or take any significant steps toward developing a license application during the term of the preliminary permit. Accordingly, no purpose would be served by issuing a permit here."

The commission added: "Our decision to rescind Green Energy's preliminary permit renders SPS' request for rehearing moot."

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