FOLKS Statement on K-T Relicensing: Lake Keowee Level Issue

Since the November 15th forum, FOLKS has received numerous inquiries asking why we do not endorse the petition being circulated calling for no level changes at all from those currently in place. Consistent with FOLKS Mission Statement, one of FOLKS stated "interests" in the relicensing process is to keep Lake Keowee levels as high as possible. However, as a Stakeholder, bound by the Stakeholder Charter, we cannot publicly endorse any specific position, and we committed to negotiate all elements of the relicensing to a mutually agreeable conclusion.

That is what we have been doing and will continue to do. FOLKS has been a strong voice for the concerns of all stakeholders (FOLKS members as well as non-members) around the lake and in the surrounding counties, and we contend that this is what you would want us to do. We have also been very active in numerous other elements and issues of the relicensing in addition to operating levels, with some excellent progress. In this statement, we will confine the discussion to Lake Keowee operating levels, particularly under severe drought conditions.

Under the current operating agreement between Duke-Energy, USACE and SEPA, from 100% down to 90% of available storage in the combined Lake Keowee plus Lake Jocassee (K-T facility) and the combined Lake Thurmond plus Lake Hartwell, the USACE cannot call for any releases into Hartwell. Between 90% and 80% of available storage, they can call for up to 25,000 acre-feet (1800cfs) of water to be released over a week to maintain balance. The 25,000 maximum is not usually attained during balancing, but the important fact is that the available storage for the K-T hydroelectric facility is based on the currently licensed maximum drawdown of Lake Keowee of 25 feet.

Under the "Trial Balloon" scenario discussed at the November 15th FOLKS Forum, the K-T available storage will be calculated based on the new proposed maximum Keowee drawdown of 10 feet (or whatever is finally agreed upon) not the current 25 feet. In addition, in the chart that was also presented at the forum titled "LIP Stages: Reservoir Elevation and Flow Releases" (and available on our website), there is a reduction in release maximum at 85% of available storage that provides for a reduction of maximum release to 20,000 acre-feet (1440 cfs). That means requested release volumes from Lake Keowee at any given time will be less than and lake level decreases will be slower than under current rules. In addition to providing the required releases downstream, increased flexibility in operating lake levels to maintain ONS on line during severe droughts is a critical need to all of us.

Another important point to remember is that the licensing process is not at an end point. There have been various alternative scenarios proposed by FOLKS, DNR and others that would result in draw downs less than 10 feet during severe droughts and these are being modeled.

FOLKS knew that a reduction in operating levels, even during the most severe droughts, was going to be the biggest public issue in the relicensing. We asked Duke-Energy to present the relicensing update to bring that issue out into the open.

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