Keowee-Toxaway studies key for new license

Duke Energy to spend $2.5 million for research

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SENECA — The public has until Thursday to comment on Duke Energy's Revised Study Plan that is part of the power company's strategy to relicense the Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project.

Federal regulators licensed the KT project in 1966 for a 50-year term that expires Aug. 31, 2016.

The KT project gave birth to Jocassee and Keowee lakes in Oconee and Pickens counties. The electricity-generating infrastructure at the two facilities provides about 868 megawatts of power.

Both reservoirs also provide cooling water for Oconee Nuclear Station, an ample supply of drinking water for the cities of Seneca and Greenville, recreational opportunities for the public and habitat for wildlife. The KT waters flow into Lake Hartwell operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and into the Atlantic Ocean at Savannah Harbor.

The Revised Study Plan (RSP) is a compilation of 14 studies that include a look at the KT project's impact on such things as water quality and supply, shoreline erosion, recreation, wildlife, reservoir level and project flow releases.

Duke Energy spokeswoman Sandra Magee said the RSP is the product of two years of work by stakeholders including local, state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations and environmental and advocacy groups.

Once the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approves the RSP on Jan. 27, the yearlong studies would be undertaken this year and in 2013.

"This data (from the studies) will give us a scientific basis for relicensing," Magee said.

Magee said it would cost $2.5 million to conduct the studies.

Duke Energy and stakeholders filed proposed study plans with FERC last summer. The RSP includes stakeholders' comments on the initial plans, and it was submitted to FERC last month.

Ben Turetzky, the executive director of Friends of Lake Keowee Society, has been engaged as a stakeholder in the relicensing process from the get-go.

"One of the critical things is for every stakeholder to state their concerns and issues up front," Turetzky said. "It's out in the open to work through them and reach an agreement.

SEE STUDIES, PAGE A5

STUDIES: 'Agreed to make ourselves clear'



FILE PHOTO

Recreational use and needs studies of Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee are among the assessments proposed in a Revised Study Plan that is part of Duke Energy's Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project relicensing.

FROM PAGE A1

"We have all agreed to make ourselves clear of what our objectives are," he added. "Everybody's behaved accordingly. It's a tough process. Five years of work is hard work."

Turetzky said FOLKS has signed off on most of the RSP.

"We will comment on one or two," he said.

Turetzky declined to go into FOLKS' concerns because of its policy not to comment in public until the group's statements are posted on the FERC website.

Oconee County Planning Director Art Holbrooks and Chief Planner Aaron Gadsby also have been engaged in the process to keep County Council abreast of what's going on.

Holbrooks said he's been amazed at the cooperation displayed by all parties and their willingness to achieve consensus.

"The goal is to have an agreement in principle signed by all the stakeholders," Holbrooks said.

Holbrooks said Oconee does not have "any hot-button issues" in the process, as do some of the advocacy groups.

"We are there to assist as we can," he said.

Holbrooks agreed that the studies would provide the support material needed for the relicensing. He said the initial KT project license pre-dated the federal Clean Water Act.

"When it was first licensed there were no rules," he said. "There've been so many changes with development since then."

Magee said stakeholders would continue to meet on a monthly basis to share and discuss information as it becomes available from the studies.

FERC will relicense the KT project for a term of 30 to 50 years when the process is completed in 2016.

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PROPOSED KEOWEE-TOXAWAY RELICENSING STUDIES

Fish Community Assessment
Hydro Structures National Register of Historic Places **Eligibility**
Recreation Use and Needs Study
Lake Jocassee Shoreline Erosion Study
Shoreline Management Plan/Shoreline Classification **Map Update**
Jocassee Tailwater Water Quality Study
Keowee Reservoir Water Quality Modeling
Reservoir Level Study
Operations Model
Water Supply Study
Wetlands Study
Avian Study
Mammal Study
Botanical Study

For more information, see the Revised Study Plan at www.duke-energy.com/lakes/keowee-toxaway-relicensing.asp on the Web, or look for a copy at the local library.