United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

August 9, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell
United States Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell,

We write to express our strong concerns regarding the addition of a fishway requirement to the Prairie du Sac Hydroelectric Facility (PDS) operating license. As the United States Fish and Wildlife Service conducts a review of options for species management in the Wisconsin River and Lake Wisconsin related to this facility, we request a full review of the potential impacts regarding invasive species and viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) disease.

The PDS, which is owned by Wisconsin Power and Light Company (WPL), is a 29-megawatt hydro-electric generating station located on the lower Wisconsin River one mile north of the Village of Prairie du Sac and 90 miles upstream from the Wisconsin River's intersection with the Mississippi River. WPL has owned and operated the PDS since 1922. It is regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and currently operates under a 30-year license.

We understand that WPL is required to install a fish passage at the PDS and to have it operational by July 1, 2015. The goal of the fishway is to provide for safe, timely, and effective fish passage at the PDS for a variety of native fish species including paddlefish and sturgeon.

However, the PDS currently functions as a permanent barrier to upstream movement of invasive species including Asian Carp. None of the invasive species that are established in the Mississippi River Basin are currently known to exist upstream of the facility, however, Asian Carp have been captured just below the PDS each of the past three years.

The established presence of Asian Carp below PDS raises significant concern that Asian Carp could penetrate above the protective wall of the facility if a fishway is installed. Opening a pathway for invasive species that are present below PDS to move upstream would cause significant adverse effects on the environment and surrounding watersheds.

As you are well aware, Asian Carp have been known to dominate entire streams, effectively pushing out native species, posing a threat to the local aquatic environment and related economy. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expressed concern that if Asian Carp reach the Great Lakes, they may negatively impact the $7 billion annual fishing industry. Even if they are kept out of the Great Lakes, continued spreading throughout the Mississippi and Wisconsin River watersheds could devastate our fresh water ecosystems and threatens the industries that rely on

them. This issue is especially timely given the Obama Administration's announcement of a series of new measures to protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp through the 2013 Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework.

Therefore, as USFWS develops its Environmental Assessment (EA) of the fishway, we strongly encourage you to perform a robust study that considers all potential alternatives to a fishway that are consistent with protecting the fish populations above the dam from invasive species.

Additionally, we are concerned by the threat of VHS disease being spread to Lake Wisconsin should a fishway be required at the PDS. The fishway will require pooling of fish into a collector which enhances the spread of the virus among fish clustered together in transit from one side of the dam to the other.

In light of these concerns and as the USFWS develops an EA on the fishway prescription at PDS, we strongly encourage your department to consider alternatives to the proposed fishway through a comprehensive NEPA study. Thank you for your consideration of this request and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Cc: Daniel M. Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tom Melius, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Director
Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Fwd: Bicameral Bipartisan letter regarding the Prairie duSac Hydroelectric Facility

1 message

Neimeyer, Sarah <sarah_neimeyer@ios.doi.gov> Thu, Aug 8, 2013 at 4:28 PM
To: Robert Howarth <robert_howarth@ios.doi.gov>, Fay Iudicello <fay_iudicello@ios.doi.gov>, Stephenne Harding <stephenne_harding@ios.doi.gov>, "Buckner, Jason" <jason_buckner@ios.doi.gov>, Lauren Bogard <lauren_bogard@ios.doi.gov>

This letter just came in.

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Weigel, Deborah (Ron Johnson)** <Deborah_Weigel@ronjohnson.senate.gov>
Date: Thu, Aug 8, 2013 at 4:21 PM
Subject: Bicameral Bipartisan letter regarding the Prairie duSac Hydroelectric Facility
To:

Hello Everyone,

I wanted to share a copy of a letter signed by my boss, Senator Ron Johnson and Senator Tammy Baldwin, Congressman Pocan, and Congressman Petri to the Secretary of the Interior regarding the addition of a fishway requirement at the Prairie du Sac Hydroelectric facility operating license. I will drop a hardcopy of this letter in the mail tomorrow. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Deborah

Deborah Weigel

Legislative Assistant

Office of U.S. Senator Ron Johnson (WI)

Phone: (202)-224-5323

Deborah_Weigel@ronjohnson.senate.gov

—
Sarah C. Neimeyer, Director

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THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

SEP 1 8 2013

The Honorable Ron Johnson
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

Thank you for your letter of August 9, 2013, regarding the addition of a fishway to the Prairie du Sac Hydroelectric Facility on the Wisconsin River and your concerns regarding the introduction of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and pathogens into this river system. The Department of the Interior shares your concerns on this matter.

The 2002 licensing of the Prairie Du Sac Dam provided an opportunity to reconnect portions of the Wisconsin River ecosystem. As a condition of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission License authorizing electric power generation at the dam, and pursuant to Section 18 of the Federal Power Act, the dam owner, Wisconsin Power and Light (WP&L, a subsidiary of Alliant Energy) was required to install safe and effective fish passage.

Since 2004, representatives from WP&L, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the River Alliance (a non-governmental organization) have been working cooperatively to design a fish passage facility and to develop an operating protocol that will maximize the upstream movement of fishes, while minimizing the chance that it will facilitate the upstream spread of AIS and pathogens. The operation of the upstream passage facility must account for a wide variety of AIS and pathogens, but the two you mention, Asian carp and the fish disease Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS), are of particular concern to the FWS.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the FWS will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the impacts of several alternatives in addition to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, for a proposed fishway at the Prairie du Sac dam. The alternatives under consideration will be analyzed to determine which meet the needs of the proposal while also preventing the spread of invasive species. The information collected for the EA will support the selection and approval of an alternative for fish passage that includes measures necessary to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts. The EA will describe the affected environment, including species and habitats, and the effects of the alternatives on water resources, water quality, cultural resources, land use, recreation, water use, local economy, and environmental justice.

Thank you for your interest in this project. If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact the FWS Director, Mr. Dan Ashe, directly at (202) 208-4717, or have your staff contact Mr. Pete Fasbender, Project Leader of the Green Bay, Wisconsin Field Office at (920) 866-1725.

Sincerely,

Sally Jewell

Sally Jewell