

Principles of Water Use Planning for BC Hydro

Preamble

The need for a water use plan process in British Columbia reflects an increased awareness of environmental and social objectives and the need to balance various (and sometimes competing) interests in water resource management.

Water use plans (WUPs) are intended to provide greater clarity with respect to the use of water resources, for the licensee/proponent as well as for other water users, by specifying operating parameters and boundaries. The following seven principles have been developed through the efforts of a multi-agency working group. They are intended to guide the WUP process.

1 Recognition of Multiple Objectives

The WUP process is designed to provide benefits to residents of British Columbia across a variety of cultural, economic, environmental, safety and social objectives. A range of water uses and interests, therefore, should be identified and considered as part of planning and evaluation at water control facilities. Every WUP must address fish and aquatic habitat protection, flood control, beneficial use of water and heritage and cultural values.

rights and responsibilities, nor does it constrain future enactments. Rather, the process seeks to clarify those rights and responsibilities in terms of required operating parameters for specific water control facilities in the province.

Operations that are in accordance with the terms and conditions of a water use plan approved by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), and if applicable, a *Fisheries Act* authorization, will be in compliance with the *Fisheries Act*.

2 Legal and Regulatory Constraints

The WUP process does not alter existing legal and constitutional

Over time a variety of circumstances will likely occur which are not covered by the WUP. A scheduled review period, coupled with adaptive management will provide opportunities to incorporate

evolving knowledge. In addition, a plan can be reviewed upon request of DFO if a new issue or conflict affecting fish or fish habitat emerges during a plan's implementation.

To address emergency situations affecting fish and fish habitat, the comptroller of water rights, BC Hydro and DFO will meet expeditiously to resolve these issues with the intent to avoid further detrimental impacts to fish and fish habitat.

3 Framework for Water Use Plan Discussions

The WUP process will be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of specific water control facilities, their water use impacts and participants in the process. At the same time, WUP discussions will be structured to identify and explore the implications of a range of operating alternatives to seek compromises across water uses.

The WUP process will strive but not require consensus recommendations among participants. The consultative process will be carefully documented. Areas of consensus

and the diversity of views around unresolved issues must be clearly identified and recorded.

The information constitutes advice and recommendations to the licensee/proponent as an input to draft water use plans.

4 Trade-offs within Constraints

The recognition of trade-offs among different water users and interests is part of the WUP process and may be characterized in monetary and non-monetary terms. Trade-offs occur within the bounds set by legislation, regulations, policy, constitutional rights and provincial funding constraints. Trade-offs will also recognize facilities as they exist and seek incremental improvement to balance various water uses.

5 Inclusiveness of Water Use Plan Consultative Process

The WUP process should be flexible and provide the opportunity for interested parties to participate in a meaningful way. Parties are expected to participate in good faith and not to opt out in anticipation of

further inquiry by the comptroller or appeal of the comptroller's decision.

6

Role of Information in the Water Use Plan Process

Information for developing a water use plan is required as early as possible in the WUP process and should support the examination of a full range of operating alternatives. All parties should have full access to this information which should be presented in a manner that is understandable to all participants. Because information can come from many sources (e.g., anecdotal, technical, quantitative) and is subject to uncertainty, the extent and quantity of the available information, and its implications for WUP recommendations, should be noted appropriately.

7

Review and Revision of Water Use Plans

The timing of periodic reviews should be specified in the WUP and be consistent with the nature of the issues and the degree of the information uncertainty. The timing of the review should also provide a reasonable measure of security for facility operations.

Provision for ongoing revision of plans based on adaptive management should be incorporated into the WUP documentation when appropriate so that managers can stay up-to-date with new information as it comes available. ■

Refer to
Water Use Plan Guidelines,
Province of British Columbia
December 1998
available on the internet at:
www.elp.gov.bc.ca/wat/wup/wup.html

You can also find more
information at:

www.gov.bc.ca/ei/
and
www.bchydro.bc.ca/wup

BC hydro



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