



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

3817 Luker Road
Cortland, NY 13045



January 8, 2016

Ms. Dana Hall
Low Impact Hydropower Institute
PO Box 194
Harrington Park, NJ 07640

Attn: Pat McIlvaine

**RE: West Branch St. Regis River Hydroelectric Project (FERC #10461)
Low Impact Hydro Recertification**

Dear Ms. Hall:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the January 4, 2016, email request for comments on the recertification of the West Branch St. Regis Hydroelectric Project (Project) located on the St. Regis River in St. Lawrence County, New York. To the best of our knowledge, Brookfield Renewable Energy (Brookfield) is operating the Project consistent with their license requirements. Our responses to specific questions follow.

- 1. To your knowledge, is the West Branch St. Regis River Project in compliance with any conditions issued pursuant to flows to enhance riverine fish species?*

Shortly after relicensing, the Allens Falls development was not meeting minimum flow requirements. The problem was traced to an inaccurate gate release measurement and clogging of the release structure with debris. Brookfield responded by installing pins that the operators could view to ensure that minimum flow requirements were being met. They also modified the gate curve and instructed their operators to keep the release gate debris-free. Trout were stocked in the river as mitigation. We have had no reports of inaccurate releases since the corrective measures were taken.

- 2. The application states that to date, neither upstream or downstream passage is required for the project for either anadromous fish or American eel. Can you confirm this is accurate?*

This is accurate. There are no American eel or anadromous fish species in this portion of the St. Regis River. Downstream passage was not required because the reservoirs contain

primarily warmwater fish species while the riverine reaches downstream have excellent trout fisheries.

3. *Are there any new issues associated with flows or fisheries that have arisen regarding this project in the past five years?*


There have been no new flow issues or fishery-related issues at this Project.

4. *Do you have any concerns about continued certification of this Project under LIHI's program?*

The Service has no concerns at this time.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the recertification request. If you have any questions or desire additional information, please contact Steve Patch at 607-753-9334.

Sincerely,


for David A. Stilwell
Field Supervisor

cc: TU, Plattsburgh, NY (W. Wellman)
NYSDEC, Watertown, NY (L. Ambeau)