

Parks Canada Agency
Technical report:
Mackenzie Valley Review Board EA0708-007
Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project – Dezé Energy Corp.
December 11, 2009

Introduction

Parks Canada Agency's mandate is:

On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations.

Parks Canada has an interest in the environmental assessment of the proposed Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project by Dezé Energy Corp. because the transmission line component of the proposed development crosses the study area for a proposed national park reserve on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake

Parks Canada's role in this assessment is as expert advisor. The focus of this report is to identify issues where the proposed transmission line associated with the Taltson Hydroelectric Development may affect:

- the ecological integrity of the national park reserve on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, at such time as it may be established, and
- visitor aesthetic and wilderness experience within the proposed park study area.

Background: Land Withdrawal and Establishment of a National Park Reserve

In 1970, a land withdrawal order first established a study area for a proposed national park on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories. It was repealed and replaced with an annexed order respecting the withdrawal of lands for a park (*Withdrawal from Disposal Order (East Arm of Great Slave Lake National Park – Great Slave Lake, N.W.T. P.C. 1997-1922)*). There is no expiry date for this order. In 2007, another annexed order further identified an increased area of land withdrawn from disposal in order to facilitate the establishment of a national park. (*Order respecting the Withdrawal from Disposal of Certain Lands in the Northwest Territories (East Arm of Great Slave Lake, N.W.T.) P.C. 2007-1659*). This order will end in 2012, unless renewed.

The two land withdrawals combined constitute the current study area for the national park reserve on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake. These lands are removed from consideration for disposal. The withdrawal order, however, does not apply to the

disposition of “interests in land to be used for transmission lines and ancillary facilities for power generated at any hydroelectric project on the Taltson River.”

Parks Canada, in cooperation with its partners and stakeholders, continues to pursue the development of a national park reserve on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake, with the understanding that the transmission line associated with the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion is an allowable project within the area under study.

Although the final route of the proposed line is not defined in detail, it is clear that the preferred alternative for the transmission line would bisect the study area land (A staging area to be used for line construction is also included within the study area). Upon completion of the transmission line, and subsequent establishment of a national park reserve, the segments of the transmission line within the park boundaries would be subject to any relevant requirements of the *Canada National Parks Act* and regulations pursuant to the *Act*.

If the national park reserve were established before the power line was put in place, it would be at the discretion of Parliament as to whether a power line would be permitted to cross the park lands.

Specific Comments

Issue 1: Protection of cultural sites and sensitive ecological sites

Reference: DAR Section 15.12.4.1 and Table 15.12.1 (Mitigation for Effects to Sites of Traditional and Cultural Significance and Archaeological Sites)

Developer’s Mitigation: Noted mitigation includes archaeological assessments for areas that are considered likely to contain archaeological resources, and provision of a manual for recognizing heritage resources to construction crews.

Comment: Parks Canada agrees with this mitigation, but notes that qualification and/or training is not addressed in this mitigation. Although a manual for identification provides some guidance, it is not a substitute for training or other appropriate qualifications.

In addition to cultural sites, sensitive ecological sites (e.g. denning sites, etc) should be recognized and avoided.

Finally, should such sites be identified in the study area for the proposed national park reserve or its environs, this information is of interest to Parks Canada.

Recommendations:

- (1) Parks Canada recommends that assessments be made by qualified people prior to construction in areas of high potential for important cultural sites.

- (2) Parks Canada recommends that environmental monitors qualified to recognize sensitive sites (both cultural and ecological) work on site with construction crews, and that the qualifications and/or training be made explicit.
- (3) Parks Canada recommends that if any such sites (both cultural and ecological) are identified during construction, in the study area for the proposed national park reserve, that this information be communicated to Parks Canada, including the nature and location of the site.

Issue 2: Visitor wilderness experience

Reference: DAR Section 15.10.8 (List of mitigation)

Commitment 61 (Information regarding differing tower types)

Meeting Report November 26, 2009 (Dezé commitment to providing graphical representation of towers)

Developer's Mitigation and Information:

Dezé Energy noted that the transmission line crossing the Lockhart River within the proposed national park reserve will be determined in discussion with the community of Lutzel K'e.

Comment: Parks Canada supports discussion of the transmission line crossing of the Lockhart River with communities with a traditional cultural interest in this project. Parks Canada also has an interest in this crossing, and in the final transmission line route selection, due to the potential impact on the wilderness experience of visitors to the national park reserve.

Recommendation:

- (1) Parks Canada recommends that Dézé Energy include Parks Canada in discussions with respect to final route selection, including the crossing of the Lockhart River, as the project moves into the detailed design phase.

Conclusion

Parks Canada believes that should the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project proceed, Dézé Energy Corporation should:

- Implement proposed mitigation measures as outlined in the Developer's Assessment Report;
- Implement commitments made during the review of the project, including presentation of information relating to effects of the transmission line on aesthetic and wilderness experience in the national park reserve, and continued discussion with Parks Canada on these issues related to the final transmission line route, and tower choices; and
- Implement the recommendations in this report.