



## United States Department of the Interior

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**  
REGION I Northeast Appalachian  
15 State Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02109-3572

June 20, 2024

Filed Electronically ER 24/0151

Debbie-Anne Reese, Acting Secretary  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20426

Re: Comments on Pre-Application Document & SD1 for the Brunswick Hydroelectric Project FERC#2284

Dear Secretary Bose,

The National Park Service (NPS) offers the following comments on the PAD and Scoping Document, FERC Notice dated April 16, 2024. The NPS files these comments pursuant to our authority under Section 10(a) of the Federal Power Act and 18 C.F.R. Section 4.38.

### **Safe and Convenient Portage – Recreational and ADA Improvements**

#### Canoe Portage At Mill Street & Mill Street to 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Park

During the public Scoping Meeting, Brunswick representatives were present and stated that the portage users often must be transported from the Mill Street take out to the public access on Water Street. That route is the heavily traveled Route 1. There is no sidewalk along the river side of the road to the major intersection with Main Street, which also must be crossed to get to 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Park. Portagers can opt to walk a small section of the route along Cabot Street which runs between two public parking areas.

This presents an opportunity for the Town of Brunswick and the applicant BWPH to work in consultation to develop and fund a plan for improvements that would allow for safe vehicle and pedestrian separation and adequate signage along that section of the portage route.<sup>1</sup> The Mill Street Streetscape Plan offers several viable options. The NPS supports this plan and encourages full participation by BWPC to achieve the goals of that plan.

#### 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Park

PAD Section 5.7.3.1 describes existing recreation sites. 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Park lies just across Main Street on River right, the south shore of the Androscoggin River, along the west end of the Frank J.

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<sup>1</sup> See exhibit C Town of Brunswick PAD SD1 comments dated 6.20.24

Wood Bridge. The park provides direct views to and across the river and upriver towards the dam. It is used as a put in for paddlers who take at the Mill Street location, and for passive recreation. Two sets of stairs lead down to a lower viewing area, and further down to the put in site. Due to its location, debris periodically accumulates in areas where it can limit access for users. Paddlers coming upriver often use the park to take out due to its proximity to Brunswick's commercial district.

*The Park is on lands owned by the Town of Brunswick and BWPH. A quarter-acre section of the park was donated to the Town of Brunswick, with an easement retained, by BTLT.... The parcel owned by BWPH was leased to the Town in 1984 for the duration of the original FERC license.... Per the lease agreement, BWPH is responsible for signage required by the FERC license, and Brunswick is responsible for all other operations and maintenance costs associated with the park.*

During the public scoping meetings held on May 7, 2024, it was noted that the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust holds a conservation easement on part of the land encompassing the park as well.

Exhibit B of the Town of Brunswick's PAD/SD1 comments dated 6.20.24 sets out a plan for redevelopment of the park to allow for significantly improved public use and access. The NPS supports this plan and encourages full participation by BWPC to achieve the goals of that plan.

Street Level, Middle Level at right.



Stairs to Middle Level



Middel Level



Stairs to Lower Level and River Access



Debris at River level.



Woody Vegetation along River Level.



### Summer Street Overlook

According to the PAD, *On July 27, 2012, BWPH granted the Town of Topsham the right to construct a trail on a BWPH-owned parcel of land abutting Summer Street and the left dam abutment (FPL Energy Maine Hydro LLC and Town of Topsham, 2012). The Town subsequently developed the site as part of the Androscoggin Riverwalk, described in the following section. Per the 2012 agreement, the Town of Topsham is responsible for site operations and maintenance. The site is set on a small hill overlooking the river, providing scenic views of the river, Shad and Goat Islands, the Project dam, the Frank J. Wood Bridge, and historic buildings in Brunswick. Site amenities include a gravel pullout off Summer Street for trail parking, an approximately 8-foot-wide paved multi-use trail, trash receptacles, dog waste stations, a bench, and interpretive signage. The site is located within the Project boundary.*

Exhibit D of the Town of Brunswick's PAD/SD1 comments dated 6.20.24 includes the Androscoggin River Brunswick-Topsham Riverwalk Feasibility Study which includes a plan that would greatly improve public use and access throughout the project boundary. The NPS supports this plan and encourages full participation by BWPC to achieve the goals of that plan.

### Water Street Access

Although the Water Street access (below) is a valuable public river access site, it is not a convenient portage location as it adds an additional .5 miles beyond 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Park, along a well traveled road with limited sight lines.



### Ongoing and Future Local Goals and Objectives

Both 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Park and the Summer Street Overlook are located within the FERC project boundary, and therefore it is appropriate for the FERC to require that all future costs associated with O&M and upgrades, including ADA compliant facilities, be the responsibility of the licensee. An agreement or plan for specific facilities, potential upgrades and ADA compliance measures could be developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders as part of the pre-filing process, to be included within FERC's NEPA compliance for the relicensing and incorporated as license conditions.

Towards this goal, the Towns of Brunswick and Topsham, the MDOT and the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust have identified several options, set out in Exhibits A, B, C and D of the Town of Brunswick's PAD and SD1 Comments filed June 20, 2024. The NPS fully supports these goals and anticipates the involvement and assistance of BWPB to accomplish them, which will provide improved, safe and convenient recreational access associated with the Brunswick Hydroelectric Project.

A post licensing Recreation Management Plan completed within one year of license issuance should be developed in consultation with appropriate stakeholders to set out actions and implementation dates during the term of the new license.

## Conclusion

The multiple plans and multiparty efforts associated with improvements to public safety and improved recreational access associated with the Brunswick Hydroelectric Project provides a significant head start in the relicensing process. It also serves as a barometer of the importance of these facilities to the local communities and to the State of Maine through its DOT. The timing of the reconstruction of the Main Street Bridge adds to these opportunities.

The NPS looks forward to working with the host communities, BWPH and other stakeholders to accomplish the mutual goal of improving and enhancing safe and convenient recreational access and use opportunities in the project area and within the project boundary.

If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Mendik at [kevin\\_mendik@nps.gov](mailto:kevin_mendik@nps.gov) or by phone at 617-320-3496.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Mendik', is positioned above the typed name and title.

Kevin Mendik  
NPS NER Hydro Assistance Program Manager