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Sullivan Creek Hydroelectric Project Negotiation Team Has First Meeting

The first meeting of the newly formed settlement negotiation team for the surrender of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license for the Sullivan Creek Hydroelectric Project, met in Spokane, Washington on December 4 and 5, 2008. The meeting agenda included such items as discussing and signing of a team operating agreement; developing a public communication plan; discussing the structure and process for the negotiations; and the building of a website to help keep people informed about the project and the negotiations. The website is located at <http://sullivancreek.ecr.gov>

The settlement negotiation team is made up of a mix of various state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, the public utility district, various local officials, and representatives of the local community. The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution is facilitating the meeting and assisting the team with completing its goal of developing a comprehensive settlement package, to be filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, resolving the issue of surrendering of the license for the project and any special use authorization that may need to be issued by the USDA Forest Service for facilities that will remain on National Forest System lands.

“While this first meeting was primarily a logistics and process clarification meeting, the group came together as a team and did a great job,” said Cherie Shanteau-Wheeler, the mediator with the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. “This is going to be a lot of work, but I know this group is up to the challenge” she added.

In addition to the structure and process of the negotiations, team members described their interests as they relate to the project and the surrender of license. Some of those interests included ongoing management and ownership of the project; fishing; recreation; the ecological values of Sullivan Creek; wetlands; threatened & endangered species, restoration of native fish; protection of National Forest System lands; economic viability of county communities; tourism; water quality; and costs to tax payers and utility rate payers.

The next meeting of the negotiation team will be in early January. The negotiation process is expected to last well in to the summer of 2009.

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