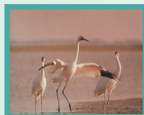


## Developing Small/Low-Impact Hydropower Projects

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is experiencing increased interest from those seeking to develop small/low-impact hydropower projects. This brochure explains how best to obtain Commission authorization to construct and operate these small/low-impact projects while assuring adequate protection of environmental resources. Benefits of developing these projects include:

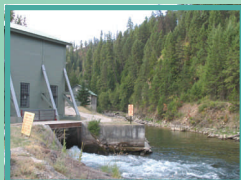
- Emission-free renewable source of energy
- Low impacts to environmental resources
- Financial incentives to developers under state Renewable Portfolio Standards



### FERC's Role

Under the Federal Power Act, FERC is charged with the authorization and regulation of the nation's non-federal hydropower resources. FERC issues three types of authorizations:

- **License** – Issued for 30- to 50-year terms. Must be renewed. Gives the licensee the power of “eminent domain” to obtain lands or other rights needed to construct, operate, and maintain the hydroelectric project.
- **5-Megawatt (MW) Exemption** – Issued in perpetuity. Must be located at the site of an existing dam or use a natural water feature. Must propose increased capacity. The exemptee must own all lands and facilities other than federal lands to be eligible.
- **Conduit Exemption** – Issued in perpetuity. Must use the potential of a conduit constructed primarily for non-hydropower purpose. The exemptee must own the proposed powerhouse and the lands upon which the powerhouse will be located. A conduit exemption may not use federal lands.



## General Process for License and Exemption Applications

### Getting started

- Contact FERC staff to get advice on the best way to obtain authorization for your project (1-866-914-2849 or [smallhydro@ferc.gov](mailto:smallhydro@ferc.gov))

### Pre-filing consultation and initial project review

- Gather needed information to identify project-related effects
- Send package describing your proposal and environmental effects to Commission staff, all relevant government and tribal agencies, and non-government and public entities
- Meet with all affected agencies and entities to explain your proposal and to request input
- Determine whether and to what degree affected agencies and entities are willing to expedite the consultation process or forego a consultation stage
- Apply for and obtain a state Water Quality Certification or waiver
- Prepare and file a license or exemption application



### Application processing

- Commission staff requests comments on application from all interested agencies and entities
- Commission staff conducts comprehensive project review, including issuing environmental document (not usually required for conduit exemption)
- Commission acts on application



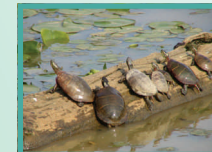
## How FERC May Expedite the Process

- With resource agency cooperation, waive some pre-filing consultation requirements
- Combine scoping of issues with pre-filing consultation
- Combine public noticing requirements
- Shorten comment periods
- Use a single environmental document in lieu of draft and final documents



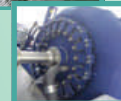
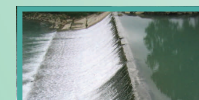
## Factors that Reduce Time and Cost

- Project at existing dam
- Little change to water flow and use
- Unlikely to: affect threatened and endangered species; or need fish passage
- Applicant owns all lands needed for project construction and operation
- Information on existing environmental resources and project effects readily available
- A complete application that addresses all issues



## Examples of Successfully Expedited Projects

- Lower Turnbull Drop Project No. 12597 (5.0 MW), Upper Turnbull Drop Project No. 12598 (4.1 MW), Mill Coulee Drops Project No. 12599 (1.05 MW)- licenses issued (07/28/06) 8 months from filing
- Corriveau Project No. 12629 (350 kW)- exemption issued (10/24/06) 10 months from filing



# Guidance on the Internet

To access guidance on small hydropower development:

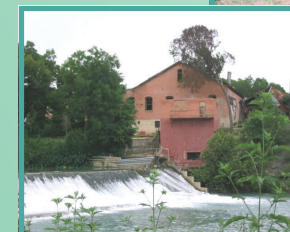
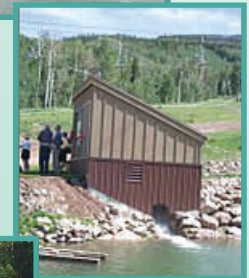
- Point your browser to [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)
- Using the drop down menu from the fifth navy blue tab, **Industries**, select **Hydropower**.
- Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on **General Information** in the lower right hand corner.
- Click on **Licensing**.

The screenshot shows the FERC website interface. The 'Industries' menu is expanded, showing 'Hydropower' as a selected option. The 'Hydropower' sub-menu is also expanded, showing 'General Information' as a selected option. The 'Licensing' sub-menu is also expanded, showing 'Licensing Process', 'Contents of an application', 'Comprehensive Plans', 'Consultation', and 'Filing and Service Requirements'.



Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First St., N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20426

# Guide to Developing Small/Low-Impact Hydropower Projects



For further assistance please contact us at:  
1-866-914-2849 or [smallhydro@ferc.gov](mailto:smallhydro@ferc.gov)

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission