

128 FERC ¶ 62,013  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Wisconsin River Power Company

Project No. 1979-054

ORDER AMENDING PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE CONTROL MEASURES IN  
APPROVED MONITORING PLAN

(Issued July 09, 2009)

1. On January 13, 2009, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPSC) on behalf of Wisconsin River Power Company (WRPC), licensee for the Alexander Hydro Project license (2005 Order),<sup>1</sup> filed a supplement to the Commission-approved Invasive Species Monitoring Plans.<sup>2</sup> The filed supplement contains the proposed plan to amend the control measures for purple loosestrife in the Alexander Project area. The Alexander Project is located on the Wisconsin River, near the city of Merrill, Lincoln county, Wisconsin.

BACKGROUND

2. Under the 2005 Order, the licensee has been documenting the locations and populations of purple loosestrife colonies at the project since 2005. The monitoring surveys indicate established purple loosestrife populations throughout much of the project boundary. The approved control method since 2005 has been to cut by hand only the small colonies (1 to 5 plants) and to then spray the remaining stems with an appropriate aquatic herbicide, which has shown varying success from year to year and overall has not proven very effective. Therefore, the licensee is proposing to discontinue the current method for small colonies and to employ a more effective control plan by using biocontrol.

LICENSEE'S PROPOSED CONTROL PLAN

A. Control Methods.

3. The licensee proposes to implement biocontrol measures by releasing *Gallerucella* sp. beetles for five years or until each existing purple loosestrife colony noted during

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<sup>1</sup> See Order Issuing New License, 110 FERC ¶ 62,215 (issued March 4, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> The invasive species monitoring plan was approved pursuant to article 406 as part of the 2005 Order Issuing New License.

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shoreline surveys has an established beetle population. The licensee proposes this measure provided it can obtain property owner permission on locations not owned by the licensee in fee.

#### B. Monitoring.

4. The licensee proposes to conduct annual purple loosestrife surveys of the entire project shoreline area while purple loosestrife is in bloom, between the months of June and August. The licensee proposes to document the location of purple loosestrife colonies using Global Positioning System (GPS). The licensee proposes conducting annual surveys for five years. If after five years, annual surveys indicate that the spread of purple loosestrife is controlled or the population is reduced, then the licensee proposes to reduce the frequency of conducting surveys to once every three years in conjunction with the current frequency for Eurasian water-milfoil monitoring. The licensee proposes that the spread of purple loosestrife will be considered controlled if (1) there is documented beetle feeding on all purple loosestrife colonies, (2) the colonies are contained or reduced in size or number, or (3) the condition of the purple loosestrife plants has deteriorated based on reduced plant size, reduced flowering, and reduced plant vigor. The licensee proposes that if the monitoring surveys do not demonstrate control of the spread of purple loosestrife, the licensee will then consult with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on an appropriate monitoring schedule.

#### C. Documentation.

5. The licensee proposes to provide a report on purple loosestrife populations and on beetle release sites, if applicable, to the WDNR and FWS by November 15 of each year in which a survey or beetle release takes place. The licensee states that the report and any agency comments will be provided to the Commission by December 31 of each year in which a survey or beetle release takes place. The licensee proposes that the report will include a map of the total project area and information sheet. The map will include relative populations of each purple loosestrife colony based on colony size: small colonies (1-5 plants), medium colonies (6-50 plants) and dense colonies (> 50 plants). The licensee states that each colony observed will be issued a unique number and entered into the licensee's GPS. The licensee proposes that data from each colony will be recorded on an information sheet to be submitted. The information sheet will contain information on documented beetle feeding, the size and the number of colonies, and general plant condition at each site.

#### D. Public Awareness.

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6. The licensee proposes to ensure that invasive plant informational signs are placed at all of the licensee-owned public access areas within the project boundary.

#### AGENCY COMMENTS

7. By letter dated December 4, 2008, the licensee provided a copy of the proposed purple loosestrife control plan to the WDNR and FWS for their review and comment. By e-mail dated December 5, 2008, the WDNR stated that it is a good control plan. The WDNR had no specific recommendations for modifying the proposal. No written comments were received from the FWS.

#### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8. There are no outstanding issues with the proposed plan. We note that the proposed control plan does not affect the remaining measures in the 2005 Order. Approved measures regarding Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels remain unchanged and must continue to be implemented. We recommend that the licensee release *Gallerucella* sp. beetles as proposed as a biological control measure for at least five years at the project site, starting in 2010, and provide a report on purple loosestrife populations and beetle release sites to the WDNR and FWS by November 15 of each year in which a survey or beetle release takes place. The control report and any agency comments should be filed with the Commission by December 31 of each year in which a survey or beetle release takes place, starting in 2010. The Commission should reserve the right to require changes to the plan based on reports or new information filed.

9. In summary, the proposed amended control plan for purple loosestrife enhances the existing approved plan and should provide more effective controls than the previous plan of removing only small colonies of this invasive plant. More effective control should prevent the continuous spread of purple loosestrife in the project area. Therefore, the proposed amendment to the existing purple loosestrife monitoring plan should be approved.

#### The Director orders:

(A) Wisconsin River Power Company's (licensee) revised invasive species monitoring plan, approved on March 4, 2005, as part of the Order Issuing New License, is amended to include the licensee's control plan for purple loosestrife filed on January 13, 2009.

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(B) The licensee shall release *Gallerucella* sp. beetles as a biological control measure for at least five years at the project site, starting in 2010, and shall provide a report on purple loosestrife populations and beetle release sites to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service by November 15 of each year in which a survey or beetle release takes place. The control report and any agency comments shall be filed with the Commission by December 31 of each year in which a survey or beetle release takes place, starting in 2010. The Commission reserves the right to require changes to the plan based on reports or new information filed.

(C) This order constitutes final agency action. Requests for rehearing by the Commission may be filed within 30 days from the date of issuance of this order, pursuant to 18 C.F.R. § 385.713.

George H. Taylor  
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and Compliance

Document Content(s)

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