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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Nekoosa Papers Inc.) Project Nos. 2255-010
) 2291-009, and 2292-007

ORDER MODIFYING AND APPROVING PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE MONITORING PLANS
JUL 16 1997

On January 14, 1997, Nekoosa Paper Inc. (licensee) filed purple loosestrife monitoring plans, pursuant to article 407 of the license for the Nekoosa Project and article 408 of the licenses for the Centralia and Port Edwards Projects. The Nekoosa, Centralia, and Port Edwards Projects are located on the Wisconsin River in Wood County, Wisconsin.

Articles 407 and 408 require the licensee to file a plan to monitor for purple loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria) in project waters. The plan shall be prepared in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Further, the article states, if during the term of the license the USFWS and the WDNR deem it necessary to control or eliminate purple loosestrife, the licensee shall cooperate in this measure.

PROPOSALS

The licensee proposes to monitor purple loosestrife at the projects each year when the plants are in bloom (mid July to mid August). Monitoring will be conducted by boat and on foot as needed. The annual surveys will concentrate on open wetland areas on project lands, including riverbanks, ditches, and other low wetland sites, and will be conducted by individuals trained in the identification, biology, and ecology of the species. The surveyors will estimate the size of each population found and show its location on a map of the area. The licensee proposes to submit the survey results to the USFWS and the WDNR by September 15 every two years.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By letter dated December 17, 1996, the USFWS concurred with the proposed plans and made specific recommendations. By letter dated December 6, 1996, the licensee requested comments on the plans from the WDNR. In a verbal response, the WDNR concurred with the plans and made specific recommendations. The filed plans incorporate some of the recommendations.

Regarding other recommendations, the USFWS and the WDNR recommend the licensee remove, as possible, small colonies (1 to 5 plants) of purple loosestrife found during the surveys. Further, the USFWS recommends the licensee provide a WDNR purple

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loosestrife pamphlet at public access areas to increase public awareness of the problem.

The licensee's filing includes responses to the agency recommendations. In general, the licensee believes the recommended measures are outside the scope of articles 407 and 408 and should not be part of the required plans. However, the licensee agrees, where feasible, to remove isolated small colonies of purple loosestrife; and to generally make available to the public WDNR purple loosestrife pamphlets at Nekoosa Paper Inc. offices. The licensee states, given the urban setting of the project reservoir shorelines, it is not willing to construct pamphlet holders that would likely be vandalized.

DISCUSSION

In response to the agencies' recommendations, the licensee plans to remove isolated small colonies of purple loosestrife and to provide, WDNR purple loosestrife pamphlets at Nekoosa Paper Inc. offices. These measures would help control the spread of purple loosestrife on project waters and would protect natural wetland species in and around the reservoir. Given this information, we find the measures reasonable and consistent with the licensee's responsibilities under articles 407 and 408 to cooperate with agency control efforts. For this reason, the measures should be incorporated into the required monitoring plans.

The licensee's purple loosestrife monitoring plans satisfy the requirements of articles 407 and 408. Implementation of the plans, as modified by this order, should identify populations of purple loosestrife and help control existing populations at the projects. For these reasons, the proposed plans, as modified, should be approved.

The Director orders:

(A) The purple loosestrife monitoring plans, filed on January 14, 1997, pursuant to articles 407 and 408 of the licenses for the Nekoosa, Centralia, and Port Edwards Projects, respectively, is approved as modified by paragraphs B and C.

(B) The licensee's plans to remove small colonies (1 to 5 plants) of purple loosestrife found during the annual surveys, as described in its January 13, 1997 letter (filed January 14, 1997) is hereby incorporated as part of the approved monitoring plans.

(C) The licensee's plans to provide, WDNR purple loosestrife pamphlets at Nekoosa Papers Inc. offices, as described in its letter dated January 13, 1997 (filed January 14, 1997), is hereby incorporated into the approved monitoring plans.

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


Kevin P. Madden
Acting Director
Office of Hydropower Licensing