

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Swan Lake North Pumped Storage Project (P-13318-003)

Issued: August 22, 2018

Commission Staff prepared a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the licensing of Swan Lake North Hydro LLC's (Swan Lake North Hydro) proposed 393.3-megawatt Swan Lake North Pumped Storage Project No, 13318.

Swan Lake North Hydro filed an application on October 28, 2015 for an original license to construct and operate the proposed project. The project would be located approximately 11 miles northeast of the city of Klamath Falls in Klamath County, Oregon. The project would occupy approximately 711 acres of federal lands administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and 19 acres administered by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and 1,310 acres of state, county, and private lands.

The proposed project would consist of a new upper and lower reservoir, a high-pressure steel penstock between the upper reservoir and the powerhouse, a powerhouse with generating/pumping facilities, three low-pressure steel penstocks from the powerhouse to the lower reservoir, a transmission line and substation, access roads to the lower and upper reservoirs, and accompanying facilities.

The project would be a closed-loop system, meaning it would not be connected to or use any existing surface body of water for project operations. Water to initially fill the reservoirs and to replace water lost to evaporation and seepage would come from groundwater supplied by the local groundwater agricultural pumping system and delivered to the lower reservoir via an existing underground agricultural irrigation network.

The primary issues associated with constructing and operating the project are: (1) soil erosion and fugitive dust caused by ground disturbance during construction; (2) permanent loss of 211 acres of wildlife habitat and temporary loss/disturbance of an additional 267 acres of habitat; (3) disruption of recreational use of the Oregon, California and Eastern Woods Line State Trail and local traffic during project construction; (4) visual impacts from the construction of 32.8 miles of overhead transmission line; and (5) significant unavoidable adverse effects on the Swan Lake Rim Traditional Cultural Property, which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the draft EIS, Commission staff recommended the staff alternative, which consists of measures included in Swan Lake North Hydro's proposal, as well as many of the recommendations made by state agencies and some additional measures developed by the staff.

The deadline to comment on the draft EIS is October 6, 2018.