

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc.

Project Nos. P-1892-026, P-1855-045  
and P-1904-073

FirstLight Hydro Generating Company

Project Nos. P-1889-081 and P-2485-  
063

NOTICE OF INTENT TO FILE LICENSE APPLICATION, FILING OF PRE-  
APPLICATION DOCUMENT (PAD), COMMENCEMENT OF PRE-FILING  
PROCESS, AND SCOPING; REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON THE PAD AND  
SCOPING DOCUMENT, AND IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES AND ASSOCIATED  
STUDY REQUESTS

(December 21, 2012)

- a. Type of Filing: Notice of Intent to File License Application for a New License and Commencing Pre-filing Process
- b. Project Nos.: P-1892-026, P-1855-045, P-1904-073, P-1889-081, and P-2485-063
- c. Dated Filed: October 31, 2012
- d. Submitted By: TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc. (P-1892-026, P-1855-045, and P-1904-073)  
  
FirstLight Hydro Generating Company (P-1889-081, and P-2485-063)
- e. Names of Projects: Wilder Project (P-1892-026)  
Bellows Falls Project (P-1855-045)  
Vernon Project (P-1904-073)  
Turners Falls Project (P-1889-081)  
Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project (P-2485-063)
- f. Location: The Wilder Project is located on the Connecticut River in Orange and Windsor Counties, Vermont (VT) and Grafton County, New Hampshire (NH).

The Bellows Falls Project is located on the Connecticut River in Windham County, VT and Cheshire County, NH.

The Vernon Project is located on the Connecticut River in Windsor and Windham Counties, VT and Sullivan and Cheshire Counties, NH.

The Turners Falls Project and Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project are located on the Connecticut River in Franklin County, Massachusetts (MA), Windham County, VT and Cheshire County, NH. The Turners Falls impoundment on the Connecticut River is also the lower reservoir for the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project.

The Turners Falls Project is the only project that includes federal lands. Approximately 20 acres of federally-owned lands are associated with the Department of the Interior's U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Conte Laboratory, located within the Turners Falls project boundary.

- g. Filed Pursuant to: 18 CFR Part 5 of the Commission's Regulations
- h. Applicant Contacts: Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon Projects – John Ragonese, Relicensing Project Manager, TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc., 4 Park Street, Suite 402, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 498-2851, or email [John\\_Ragonese@transcanada.com](mailto:John_Ragonese@transcanada.com).  
  
Turners Falls and Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Projects – John S. Howard, Director- FERC Hydro Compliance, FirstLight Hydro Generating Company, Northfield Mountain Station, 99 Millers Falls Road, Northfield, MA 01360, (413) 659-4489 or email [John.Howard@gdfsuezna.com](mailto:John.Howard@gdfsuezna.com).
- i. FERC Contact: Ken Hogan at (202) 502-8434 or email at [Kenneth.Hogan@ferc.gov](mailto:Kenneth.Hogan@ferc.gov).
- j. Cooperating agencies: Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies with jurisdiction and/or special expertise with respect to environmental issues that wish to cooperate in the preparation of the environmental document should follow the instructions for filing such requests described in item o below. Cooperating agencies should note the Commission's policy that agencies that cooperate in the preparation of the environmental document cannot also intervene. *See* 94 FERC ¶ 61,076 (2001).
- k. With this notice, we are initiating informal consultation with: (a) the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or NOAA Fisheries under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and the joint agency regulations thereunder at 50 CFR, Part 402, and

(b) the State Historic Preservation Officer, as required by section 106, National Historical Preservation Act, and the implementing regulations of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation at 36 CFR § 800.2.

- l. With this notice, we are designating TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc., and FirstLight Hydro Generating Company as the Commission's non-federal representatives for carrying out informal consultation, pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act for their respective projects.
- m. Both TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc., and FirstLight Hydro Generating Company filed with the Commission a Pre-Application Documents (PAD; including a proposed process plan and schedule), pursuant to 18 CFR § 5.6 of the Commission's regulations.
- n. Copies of the PADs are available for review at the Commission in the Public Reference Room or may be viewed on the Commission's website (<http://www.ferc.gov>), using the "eLibrary" link. Enter the project specific docket number, excluding the last three digits in the docket number field to access the document. For assistance, contact FERC Online Support at [FERCONlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FERCONlineSupport@ferc.gov) or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659. A copy is also available for inspection and reproduction at the addresses in paragraph h.

Register online at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/esubscription.asp> to be notified via e-mail of new filing and issuances related to these or other pending projects. For assistance, contact FERC Online Support.

- o. With this notice, we are soliciting comments on the PADs and the Commission's staff Scoping Document 1 (SD1), as well as study requests. All comments on the PAD and SD1, and study requests should be sent to the addresses above in paragraph h. In addition, all comments on the PAD and SD1, study requests, requests for cooperating agency status, and all communications to and from Commission staff related to the merits of the potential application must be filed with the Commission. Documents may be filed electronically via the Internet. See 18 CFR § 385.2001(a)(1)(iii) and the instructions on the Commission's website <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/efiling.asp>. Commenters can submit brief comments up to 6,000 characters, without prior registration, using the eComment system at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/ecomment.asp>. You must include your name and contact information at the end of your comments. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support. Although the Commission strongly encourages electronic filing, documents may also be paper-filed. To paper-file, mail an

original and seven copies to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20426.

All filings with the Commission must clearly identify the following on the first page as appropriate: Wilder Project No. 1892-026, Bellows Falls Project No. 1855-045, Vernon Project No. 1904-073, Turners Falls Project No. 1889-081), and/or Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project No. 2485-063, and bear the appropriate heading: “Comments on Pre-Application Document,” “Study Requests,” “Comments on Scoping Document 1,” “Request for Cooperating Agency Status,” or “Communications to and from Commission Staff.” Any individual or entity interested in submitting study requests, commenting on the PAD or SD1, and any agency requesting cooperating status must do so by **March 1, 2013**.

p. Scoping Process

The Commission intends to prepare a multi-project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the projects’ licensing in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The EIS will consider both site-specific and cumulative environmental impacts and reasonable alternatives to the proposed actions.

Scoping Meetings

Commission staff will hold six project specific scoping meetings in the vicinity of each project at the times and places noted below. The daytime meetings will focus on resource agency, Indian tribes, and non-governmental organization concerns, while the evening meetings are primarily for receiving input from the public. We invite all interested individuals, organizations, and agencies to attend one or both of the meeting types, and to assist staff in identifying particular study needs, as well as the scope of environmental issues to be addressed in the environmental document. The times and locations of these meetings are as follows:

**Wilder Project - Evening Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Monday January 28, 2013 at 7:00 PM  
Location: Kilton Public Library  
80 Main Street  
West Lebanon, NH 03784  
603-298-8544

For directions please visit: <http://www.leblibrary.com/getting-here>

**Wilder & Bellows Falls projects - Joint Daytime Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 at 9:00 AM  
Location: Kilton Public Library  
80 Main Street  
West Lebanon, NH 03784  
603-298-8544

For directions please visit: <http://www.leblibrary.com/getting-here>

**Bellows Falls – Evening Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 at 7:00 PM  
Location: Bellows Falls Middle School  
15 School St  
Bellows Falls, VT 05101

For directions please call Bev Baldasaro at (802) 463-4366

**Vernon, Northfield Mountain, and Turners Falls projects – Joint Daytime Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at 9:00 AM  
Location: Great Falls Discovery Center  
2 Avenue A.  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

**Vernon Project – Evening Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at 7:00 PM  
Location: Marlboro College Graduate School  
28 Vernon Street  
Brattleboro, VT 05301  
Grad School Common Area, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
(802) 258-9200

For directions please visit: <http://gradschool.marlboro.edu/contact/>

**Northfield Mountain and Turners Falls projects - Joint Scoping Evening Meeting**

Date & Time: Thursday, January 31, 2013 at 6:00 PM  
Location: Great Falls Discovery Center  
2 Avenue A.

Turners Falls, MA 01376  
(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

In addition to the six project specific scoping meetings identified above, we will hold a public scoping meeting specifically to identify cumulatively effected resources and to help identify the incremental effect of licensing these five Connecticut River projects with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the Connecticut River Basin. We invite all interested agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and individuals to attend the Cumulative Effects scoping meeting to assist us in identifying cumulatively effected resources and the associated geographic scope that should be analyzed in the EIS. The time and location of that meeting is:

### **Connecticut River Projects' Cumulative Effects – Daytime Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Thursday, January 31, 2013 at 9:00 AM  
Location: Great Falls Discovery Center  
2 Avenue A.  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

Scoping Document 1 (SD1), which outlines the subject areas to be addressed in the environmental document, was mailed to the individuals and entities on the Commission's mailing list. Copies of SD1 will be available at the scoping meetings, or may be viewed on the web at <http://www.ferc.gov>, using the "eLibrary" link. Follow the directions for accessing information in paragraph n. Based on all oral and written comments, a Scoping Document 2 (SD2) may be issued. SD2 may include a revised process plan and schedule, as well as a list of issues, identified through the scoping process.

### **Meeting Objectives**

At the scoping meetings, staff will: (1) initiate scoping of the issues; (2) review and discuss existing conditions and resource management objectives; (3) review and discuss existing information and identify preliminary information and study needs; (4) review and discuss the process plan and schedule for pre-filing activity that incorporates the time frames provided for in Part 5 of the Commission's regulations and, to the extent possible, maximizes coordination of federal, state, and tribal permitting and certification processes; and (5) discuss the appropriateness of any federal or state agency or Indian tribe acting as a cooperating agency for development of an environmental document.

Meeting participants should come prepared to discuss their issues and/or concerns. Please review the PAD in preparation for the scoping meetings. Directions on how to obtain a copy of the PAD and SD1 are included in item n. of this document.

### Meeting Procedures

The meetings will be recorded by a stenographer and will be placed in the public records of the project.

### Environmental Site Review

An environmental site review is typically held in conjunction with the Commission's NEPA scoping meetings. However, Commission staff anticipated that access to some project facilities would be limited by winter weather conditions during the early part of 2013 when scoping for these projects was scheduled. For this reason, and to provide all interested stakeholders an opportunity to view the projects' facilities, the Commission hosted the environmental site reviews in October 2012, before the onset of winter. Public notice of the environmental site reviews was issued on August 3, 2012, and published in eight newspapers from the Connecticut River projects' region. The site visits were widely attended by individuals representing, local, state, and federal government agencies, NGOs, and members of the public. At this time, the Commission does not intend to host any future environmental site reviews for these five Connecticut River projects.

Kimberly D. Bose,  
Secretary.

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Washington, DC 20426

December 21, 2012

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 1892-026 – New Hampshire / Vermont  
Project No. 1855-045 – New Hampshire / Vermont  
Project No. 1904-073 – New Hampshire / Vermont  
TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc.

Project No. 2485-063 – Massachusetts  
Project No. 1889-081 – Massachusetts  
FirstLight Hydro Generating Company

**Subject: Scoping Document 1 for the Wilder (FERC No. 1892-026), Bellows Falls (FERC No. 1855-045), Vernon (FERC No. 1904-073), and Turners Falls (FERC No. 1889-081) hydroelectric projects, and the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project (FERC No. 2485-063)**

To the Parties Addressed:

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) is currently reviewing the Pre-Application Documents (PAD) submitted by TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc. (TransCanada) for relicensing the existing Wilder (FERC No. 1892), Bellows Falls (FERC No. 1855), and Vernon (FERC No. 1904) hydroelectric projects, and the single PAD filed by FirstLight Hydro Generating Company (FirstLight) for the Turners Falls (FERC No. 1889) hydroelectric project and the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project (FERC No. 2485) (collectively referred to as the Connecticut River projects).

TransCanada's Wilder Project is located on the Connecticut River in Orange and Windsor counties, Vermont and Grafton County, New Hampshire. The Bellows Falls Project is located on the Connecticut River in Windham County, Vermont and Cheshire County, New Hampshire. The Vernon Project is located on the Connecticut River in Windsor and Windham counties, Vermont and Sullivan and Cheshire counties, New Hampshire.

FirstLight's Turners Falls Project and Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project are located on the Connecticut River in Franklin County, Massachusetts, Windham County, Vermont and Cheshire County, New Hampshire. The lower reservoir of the Northfield Mountain Project is the Turners Falls project impoundment.



The Turners Falls Project is the only project of the five Connecticut River projects that includes federal lands. Approximately 20 acres of federally-owned lands associated with the Department of the Interior's U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Conte Laboratory is located within the Turners Falls project boundary.

Under the Integrated Licensing Process (ILP), both TransCanada and FirstLight must file their preliminary licensing proposals or draft license applications by December 2, 2015; the final license applications must be filed with the Commission by April 30, 2016, two years before the licenses expire.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, Commission staff intends to prepare a multi-project environmental impact statement (EIS), which will be used by the Commission to determine whether, and under what conditions, to issue new licenses for the projects. To support our environmental review, we are beginning the public scoping process to ensure that all pertinent issues are identified and analyzed and that our multi-project EIS is thorough and balanced.

We invite your participation in the scoping process, and are circulating the attached Scoping Document 1 (SD1) to provide you with information on these five projects and to ask for comments and suggestions on our preliminary list of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS. We are also requesting that you identify any studies that would help provide a framework for collecting pertinent information on the resource areas under consideration necessary for the Commission to prepare the EIS for the projects.

We will hold six project specific scoping meetings for the Connecticut River projects to receive input on the scope of the EIS. The daytime meetings, focused on resource agencies, tribes, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerns, will begin at 9:00 AM as listed below. The evening meetings, listed below, are primarily for the public, but the public, agencies, Indian tribes and NGOs may attend either the daytime or evening scoping meetings. In addition to the six project specific scoping meetings, we will hold a public scoping meeting specifically to identify cumulatively effected resources and to help identify the incremental effect of licensing the five Connecticut River projects with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the Connecticut River Basin.

We invite all interested agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and individuals to attend one or all of these meetings. More information on the meetings is available in Section 2.2 of the enclosed SD1.

**Wilder Project - Evening Meeting**

Date & Time: Monday, January 28, 2013 at 7:00 PM

Location: Kilton Public Library  
80 Main Street  
West Lebanon, NH 03784  
(603) 298-8544

For directions please visit: <http://www.leblibrary.com/getting-here>

**Wilder & Bellows Falls projects - Joint Daytime Meeting**

Date & Time: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 at 9:00 AM

Location: Kilton Public Library  
80 Main Street  
West Lebanon, NH 03784  
(603) 298-8544

For directions please visit: <http://www.leblibrary.com/getting-here>

**Bellows Falls – Evening Meeting**

Date & Time: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 at 7:00 PM

Location: Bellows Falls Middle School  
15 School Street  
Bellows Falls, VT 05101

For directions please call Bev Baldasaro at (802) 463-4366

**Vernon, Northfield, and Turners Falls projects – Joint Daytime Meeting**

Date & Time: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at 9:00 AM

Location: Great Falls Discovery Center  
2 Avenue A.  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

**Vernon Project – Evening Meeting**

Date & Time: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at 7:00 PM

Location: Marlboro College Graduate School  
28 Vernon Street  
Brattleboro, VT 05301  
Grad School Common Area, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
(802) 258-9200

For directions please visit: <http://gradschool.marlboro.edu/contact/>

**Northfield Mountain and Turners Falls projects - Joint Evening Meeting**

Date & Time: Thursday, January 31, 2013 at 6:00 PM

Location: Great Falls Discovery Center

2 Avenue A.

Turners Falls, MA 01376

(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

**Connecticut River Projects' Cumulative Effects Meeting – Daytime Meeting**

Date & Time: Thursday, January 31, 2013 at 9:00 AM

Location: Great Falls Discovery Center

2 Avenue A.

Turners Falls, MA 01376

(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

From October 1, 2012 through October 5, 2012, the Commission hosted environmental site reviews (site visits) for the three hydroelectric projects owned and operated by TransCanada in New Hampshire and Vermont (Wilder Project, Bellows Falls Project, and Vernon Project), and the two projects owned and operated by FirstLight in Massachusetts (Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project, and Turners Falls Project). Though typically held after the filing of a PAD and in association with the scoping process, these site visits were held prior to formal scoping meetings before the onset of winter limited access to project facilities. Public notice of the environmental site reviews was issued on August 3, 2012, and published in eight newspapers from around the Connecticut River projects' region. The site visits were widely attended by individuals representing local, state, and federal government agencies, NGOs, and members of the public. At this time, the Commission does not intend to host any future environmental site reviews for these five Connecticut River projects.

SD1 is being distributed to FirstLight's and TransCanada's distribution list and the Commission's official mailing list for all five projects (see section 9.0 of the attached SD1). If you wish to be added to or removed from the Commission's official mailing list, please send your request by email to [efiling@ferc.gov](mailto:efiling@ferc.gov) or by mail to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. All written or emailed requests must specify your wish to be removed from or added to the mailing list and must clearly identify the project name(s) and FERC number(s) on the first page.

Please review the SD1 and, if you wish to provide comments, follow the instructions in section 6.0, *Request for Information and Studies*. If you have any

questions about SD1, the scoping process, or how Commission staff will develop the EIS for this project, please contact Ken Hogan at (202) 502-8434 or via email at:

[Kenneth.Hogan@ferc.gov](mailto:Kenneth.Hogan@ferc.gov). Additional information about the Commission's licensing process and the TransCanada and FirstLight projects may be obtained from our website, [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov), or TransCanada's website [www.transcanada-relicensing.com](http://www.transcanada-relicensing.com) and FirstLight's website [www.northfieldrelicensing.com](http://www.northfieldrelicensing.com).

Enclosure: Scoping Document 1

cc: Mailing List  
Public Files

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**SCOPING DOCUMENT 1**

**WILDER PROJECT (FERC NO. 1892-026)**

**BELLOWS FALLS PROJECT (FERC NO. 1855-045)**

**VERNON PROJECT (FERC NO. 1904-073)**

**TURNERS FALLS PROJECT (FERC NO. 1889-081)**

**NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN PUMPED STORAGE PROJECT**

**(FERC NO. 2485-063)**

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**VERMONT**

**MASSACHUSETTS**

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
Office of Energy Projects  
Division of Hydropower Licensing  
Washington, DC

December 2012

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# SCOPING DOCUMENT 1

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission or FERC), under the authority of the Federal Power Act (FPA),<sup>1</sup> may issue licenses for terms ranging from 30 to 50 years for the construction, operation, and maintenance of non-federal hydroelectric projects. On October 31, 2012, TransCanada Hydro Northeast Inc. (TransCanada), licensee for the existing Wilder (FERC No. 1892),<sup>2</sup> Bellows Falls (FERC No. 1855),<sup>3</sup> and Vernon (FERC No. 1904)<sup>4</sup> hydroelectric projects, filed Pre-Application Documents (PAD) and Notices of Intent (NOI) to file an application for new license with the Commission. On the same date, FirstLight Hydro Generating Company (FirstLight) filed a PAD and NOI to file application(s) for new license(s) for its existing Turners Falls Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 1889)<sup>5</sup> and its Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project (FERC No. 2485).<sup>6</sup>

The Wilder Project has an installed capacity of 35.6 megawatts (MW), an annual generation of 153,738 megawatt-hours (MWh), and is located on the Connecticut River in Orange and Windsor counties, Vermont, and Grafton County, New Hampshire. The project's dam is located at river mile (RM) 217.4, approximately 1.5 miles upstream of the White River and 7 miles downstream of the Ompompanoosuc River in the Town of Hartford, Vermont, and in the City of Lebanon, New Hampshire. The project's impoundment extends upstream about 45 miles.

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<sup>1</sup> 16 U.S.C. § 791(a)-825(r).

<sup>2</sup> The current license for the Wilder Project was issued with an effective date of December 1, 1979 and expires on April 30, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> The current license for the Bellows Falls Project was issued with an effective date of August 1, 1979 and expires on April 30, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> The current license for the Vernon Project was issued with an effective date of June 1, 1979 and expires on April 30, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> The current license for the Turners Falls Project was issued with an effective date of May 1, 1980 and expires on April 30, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> The current license for the Northfield Mountain Project was issued with an effective date of May 1, 1968 and expires on April 30, 2018.

The Bellows Falls Project has an installed capacity of 40.8 MW, an annual generation of 242,829 MWh, and is located on the Connecticut River in Windham and Windsor counties, Vermont, and Cheshire and Sullivan counties, New Hampshire. The project's dam, at RM 173.7, is about 1 mile upstream of Saxtons River and 3 miles downstream of the Williams River in the towns of Bellows Falls and Rockingham, Vermont, and in the town of Walpole, New Hampshire. The project's impoundment extends upstream about 26 miles to Chase Island at Windsor Vermont, about 1 mile below the Windsor Bridge.

The Vernon Project has an installed capacity of 36.79 MW, an annual generation of 131,516 MWh, and is located on the Connecticut River in Windham County, Vermont and Cheshire County, New Hampshire. The project's dam, at RM 141.9, is about 2 miles upstream of the Ashuelot River and 7.4 miles downstream of the West River, in the towns of Vernon, Vermont, and Hinsdale, New Hampshire. The project's impoundment extends about 26 miles upstream, terminating at the Walpole Bridge (Route 123) at Westminster Station, Vermont, about 4 miles downstream of the Bellows Falls Project (FERC No. 1855).

The Turners Falls Project and Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project are located on the Connecticut River within Franklin County, Massachusetts, Windham County, Vermont, and Cheshire County, New Hampshire. The greater portion of the Turners Falls Project and Northfield Mountain Project, including developed facilities and most of the lands within the project boundary, are located in Franklin County, Massachusetts; specifically, in the towns of Erving, Gill, Greenfield, Montague, and Northfield. The northern reaches of the Turners Falls Project and Northfield Mountain Project boundary extend to the base of the Vernon dam in the towns of Hinsdale, New Hampshire, and Vernon, Vermont. The Turners Falls Project has an installed capacity of 67.709 MW and an annual generation of 320,140 MWh. The Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project has an installed capacity of 1,119.2 MW and an annual generation of 1,143,038 MWh.

The Turners Falls Project's dam is located at approximately RM 122 on the Connecticut River in the towns of Gill and Montague, Massachusetts. The tailrace of the Northfield Mountain Project is located approximately 5.2 miles upstream of Turners Falls Project's dam, in the town of Northfield, Massachusetts. The upper reservoir of the Northfield Mountain Project is located atop Northfield Mountain in Erving, Massachusetts. The Turners Falls impoundment serves as the lower reservoir for the Northfield Mountain Project.

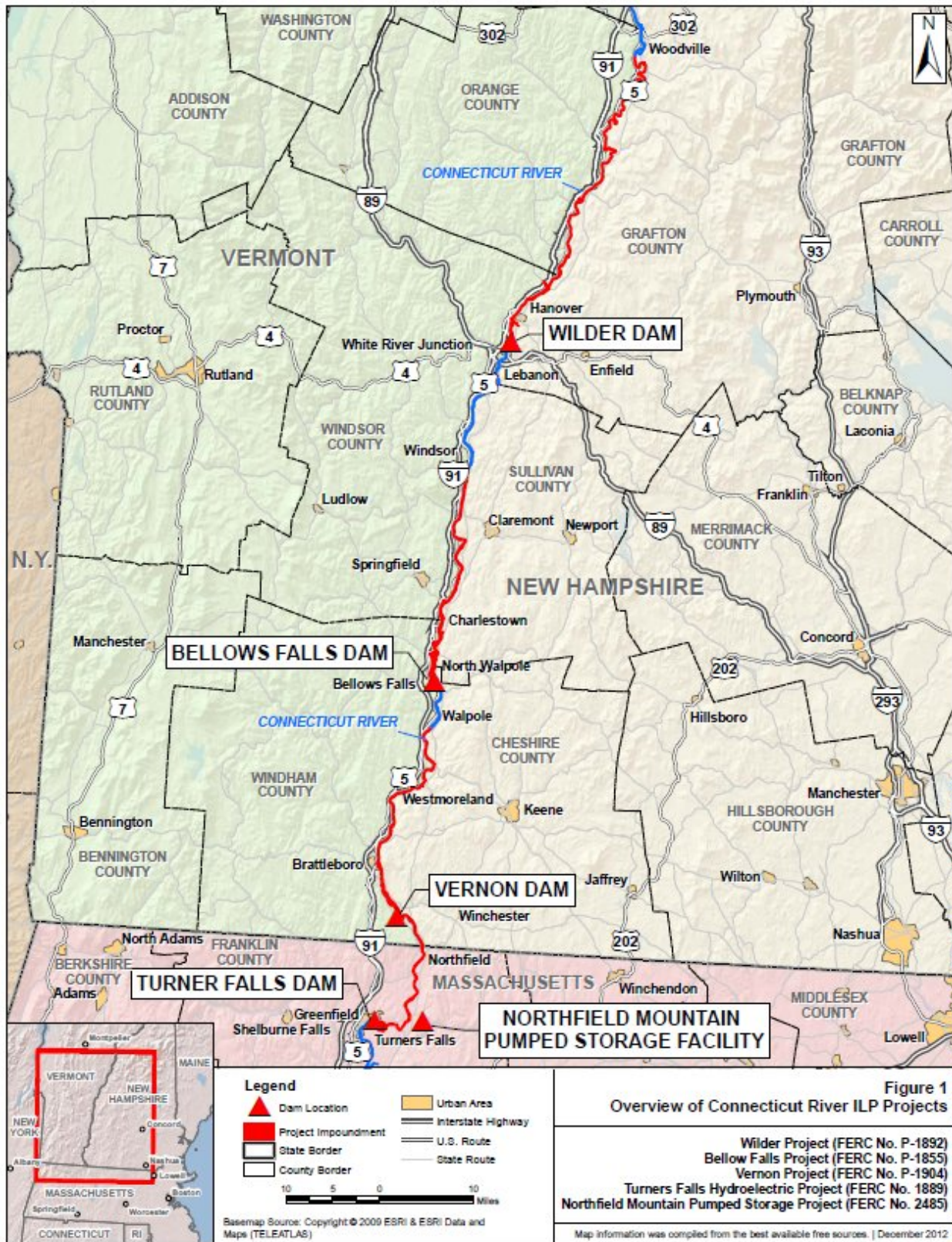


Figure 1. Projects' Location Map

The Turners Falls Project is the only project of the five Connecticut River projects that includes federal lands. Approximately 20 acres of federally-owned lands associated with the Department of the Interior's U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Conte Laboratory is located within the Turners Falls project boundary. Detailed descriptions of the projects are provided in section 3.0.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969,<sup>7</sup> the Commission's regulations, and other applicable laws require that we independently evaluate the environmental effects of relicensing the Connecticut River projects as proposed, and also consider reasonable alternatives to the licensees' proposed action. At this time, we intend to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the projects, that describes and evaluates the probable effects, including an assessment of the site-specific and cumulative effects, if any, of the licensees' proposed actions and alternatives, and used by the Commission to determine whether, and under what conditions, to issue new hydropower licenses for the projects. The EIS preparation will be supported by a scoping process to ensure identification and analysis of all pertinent issues.

## **2.0 SCOPING**

This Scoping Document 1 (SD1) is intended to advise all participants as to the proposed scope of the EIS and to seek additional information pertinent to this analysis. This document contains: (1) a description of the scoping process and schedule for the development of the EIS; (2) a description of the licensees' proposed actions and alternatives; (3) a preliminary identification of environmental issues and the licensees' proposed studies; (4) a request for comments and information; (5) a proposed EIS outline; and (6) a preliminary list of comprehensive plans that are applicable to the projects.

### **2.1 PURPOSES OF SCOPING**

Scoping is the process used to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities for enhancement or mitigation associated with a proposed action. According to NEPA, the process should be conducted early in the planning stage of the project. The purposes of the scoping process are as follows:

- invite participation of federal, state and local resource agencies, Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the public to identify significant environmental and socioeconomic issues related to the proposed project;

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<sup>7</sup> National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4370(f) (2006).

- determine the resource issues, depth of analysis, and significance of issues to be addressed in the EIS;
- identify how the project would or would not contribute to cumulative effects in the project area;
- identify reasonable alternatives to the proposed action that should be evaluated in the EIS;
- solicit, from participants, available information on the resources at issue, including existing information and study needs; and
- determine the resource areas and potential issues that do not require detailed analysis during review of the project.

## **2.2 COMMENTS AND SCOPING MEETINGS**

During preparation of the EIS, there will be several opportunities for the resource agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and the public to provide input. These opportunities occur:

- during the public scoping process and study plan meetings, when we solicit oral and written comments regarding the scope of issues and analysis for the EIS;
- in response to the Commission's notice that the project is ready for environmental analysis; and
- after issuance of the draft EIS.

In addition to written comments solicited by this SD1, we will hold six project specific public scoping meetings in the vicinity of the projects. The daytime meetings will focus on concerns of the resource agencies, NGOs, and Indian tribes, and evening meetings will focus on receiving input from the public. We invite all interested agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and individuals to attend one or both types of meetings and to assist us in identifying the scope of environmental issues that should be analyzed in the EIS.

**Wilder Project - Evening Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Monday January 28, 2013 at 7:00 PM  
Location: Kilton Public Library  
80 Main Street  
West Lebanon, NH 03784  
(603) 298-8544

For directions please visit: <http://www.leblibrary.com/getting-here>

**Wilder & Bellows Falls projects - Joint Daytime Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 at 9:00 AM  
Location: Kilton Public Library  
80 Main Street  
West Lebanon, NH 03784  
(603) 298-8544

For directions please visit: <http://www.leblibrary.com/getting-here>

**Bellows Falls – Evening Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 at 7:00 PM  
Location: Bellows Falls Middle School  
15 School Street  
Bellows Falls, VT 05101  
For directions please call Bev Baldasaro at (802) 463-4366

**Vernon, Northfield, and Turners Falls projects – Joint Daytime Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at 9:00 AM  
Location: Great Falls Discovery Center  
2 Avenue A.  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

**Vernon Project – Evening Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at 7:00 PM  
Location: Marlboro College Graduate School  
28 Vernon Street  
Brattleboro, VT 05301  
Grad School Common Area, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
(802) 258-9200

For directions please visit: <http://gradschool.marlboro.edu/contact/>

**Northfield Mountain and Turners Falls projects - Joint Scoping Evening Meeting**

Date & Time: Thursday, January 31, 2013 at 6:00 PM  
Location: Great Falls Discovery Center  
2 Avenue A.  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

In addition to the six project specific scoping meetings identified above, we will hold a public scoping meeting specifically to identify cumulatively effected resources and to help identify the incremental effect of licensing the five Connecticut River projects with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the Connecticut River Basin. We invite all interested agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and individuals to attend the cumulative effects meeting to assist us in identifying cumulatively effected resources and the associated geographic area that should be analyzed in the EIS.

**Connecticut River Projects' Cumulative Effects – Daytime Scoping Meeting**

Date & Time: Thursday, January 31, 2013 at 9:00 AM  
Location: Great Falls Discovery Center  
2 Avenue A.  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
(413) 863-3221

For directions please visit: <http://www.greatfallsma.org/>

The scoping meetings will be recorded by a court reporter, and all statements (oral and written) will become part of the Commission’s public record for the project. Before each meeting, all individuals who attend, especially those who intend to make statements, will be asked to sign in and clearly identify themselves for the record. Interested parties who choose not to speak or who are unable to attend the scoping meetings may provide written comments and information to the Commission as described in section 6.0. These meetings are posted on the Commission’s calendar located on the internet at [www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx](http://www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx), along with other related information.

Meeting participants should come prepared to discuss their issues and/or concerns as they pertain to the relicensing of the projects. It is advised that participants review the PADs in preparation for the scoping meetings. Copies of the PAD are available for review at the Commission in the Public Reference Room or may be viewed on the Commission’s website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)), using the “eLibrary” link. Enter the docket number to access the documents. For assistance, contact FERC Online Support at [FERCONlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FERCONlineSupport@ferc.gov) or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659.

Following the scoping meetings and comment period, all issues raised will be reviewed and decisions made as to the level of analysis needed. If preliminary analysis indicates that any issues presented in this scoping document have little potential for causing significant effects, the issue(s) will be identified and the reasons for not providing a more detailed analysis will be given in the EIS.

If we receive no substantive comments on SD1, then we will not prepare a Scoping Document 2 (SD2). Otherwise, we will issue SD2 to address any substantive comments received. The SD2 will be issued for informational purposes only; no response will be required. The EIS will address recommendations and input received during the scoping process.

### **2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SITE REVIEW**

An environmental site review (site visit) is typically held in conjunction with the Commission's NEPA scoping meetings. However, Commission staff anticipated that access to some project facilities would be limited by winter weather conditions during the early part of 2013 when scoping for these projects was scheduled. For this reason, and to provide all interested stakeholders an opportunity to view the projects' facilities, the Commission hosted the environmental site reviews in October 2012, before the onset of winter. Public notice of the environmental site reviews was issued on August 3, 2012, and published in eight newspapers from the Connecticut River projects' region. The site visits were widely attended by individuals representing, local, state, and federal government agencies, NGOs, and members of the public. At this time, the Commission does not intend to host any future environmental site reviews for these five Connecticut River projects.

## **3.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

In accordance with NEPA, the environmental analysis will consider the following alternatives, at a minimum: (1) the no-action alternative, (2) the applicant's proposed action, and (3) alternatives to the proposed action.

### **3.1 NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

Under the no-action alternative, the Connecticut River Projects would continue to operate as required by the current project licenses (i.e., there would be no change to the existing environment). No new environmental protection, mitigation, or enhancement measures would be implemented. We use this alternative to establish baseline environmental conditions for comparison with other alternatives.



## 3.2 TRANSCANADA'S PROJECT FACILITIES and OPERATIONS

### 3.2.1 Wilder Project

#### 3.2.1.1 Facilities

The Wilder Project is located on the Connecticut River at RM 217.4 approximately 1.5 miles upstream of the White River and 7 miles downstream of the Ompompanoosuc River. The dam is a concrete gravity structure extending across the Connecticut River from Hartford, Vermont, to Lebanon, New Hampshire and includes an earthen embankment about 400 feet long, a non-overflow gravity concrete bulkhead wall 232 feet long, a concrete forebay intake 208 feet long, a gravity concrete spillway about 526 feet long and 59 feet in maximum height, and another earthen embankment about 180 feet long. The impoundment extends upstream 45 miles from the dam and has a usable storage capacity of 13,350 acre-feet at a five-foot drawdown from full pond at elevation 384.5 feet mean sea level (msl), a surface area of 3,100 acres at full pond and a drainage area of 3,375 square miles (mi<sup>2</sup>). The powerhouse contains three generating units with a total authorized installed capacity of 35.6 MW which generated an average of 153,738 MWh annually from 1982 – 2011. The generating units consist of two 19-MW adjustable blade Kaplan turbines with an approximate per unit hydraulic capacity of 6,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), and one 3-MW vertical Francis turbine with an approximate hydraulic capacity of 700 cfs. Water flowing through the project's turbines is discharged via the project's draft tubes into the tailrace immediately below the dam.

#### 3.2.1.2 Operations

The project is operated as a load-following or peaking<sup>8</sup> hydroelectric project, with a capability to utilize 13,350 acre-feet of storage (a 5-foot drawdown) for generation purposes.<sup>9</sup> During generation, downstream flows can vary between the required minimum flow of 675 cfs<sup>10</sup> and the facility's approximate full hydraulic capacity of 10,700 cfs. During periods of sustained high flows,<sup>11</sup> the Project's generation is continuous and peaking operations are ceased. The Wilder Project's operations are coordinated with other TransCanada hydroelectric generating facilities on the Connecticut River, taking into consideration variations in demand for electricity as well as natural flow variations.

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<sup>8</sup> Load-following or peaking projects seek to maximize electrical power generation when the cost of power is high; when the cost of power is low, project generation is reduced, and a portion of the inflow to the project's reservoir is stored within the reservoir for use during the next peak generation period.

<sup>9</sup> TransCanada typically utilizes a 2.5 foot drawdown for its peaking operations.

<sup>10</sup> Typically, TransCanada provides the minimum flow of 700 cfs through its Unit No. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Daily average flow at or above the facility's full hydraulic capacity.

### 3.2.2 Bellows Falls Project

#### 3.2.2.1 Facilities

The Bellows Falls Project is located on the Connecticut River at RM 173.7, about 1 mile upstream of Saxtons River and 3 miles downstream of the Williams River at the upper end of a sharp bend of the Connecticut River at Bellows Falls, Vermont. The dam is a concrete gravity structure extending across the Connecticut River from the town of Rockingham, Vermont to the town of Walpole, New Hampshire and is 643 feet long with maximum height of 30 feet. The impoundment extends upstream 26 miles from the dam and has a usable storage capacity of 7,476 acre-feet at a three-foot drawdown from the normal full pond at elevation 291.6 feet msl, a surface area of approximately 2,804 acres at full pond and a drainage area of 5,414 mi<sup>2</sup>. The powerhouse contains three generating units with an authorized installed capacity of 40.8 MW which generated an average of 250,249 MWh annually from 2000 – 2011. The generating units consist of three 16-MW vertical Francis turbines with an approximate per unit hydraulic capacity of 3,670 cfs.

#### 3.2.2.2 Operations

The project is operated as a load-following or peaking hydroelectric project, with a capability to utilize 7,476 acre-feet of storage (a 3-foot drawdown) for generation purposes.<sup>12</sup> During generation, downstream flows can vary between the required minimum flow of 1,083 cfs<sup>13</sup> and the facility's approximate full hydraulic capacity of 11,400 cfs. During periods of sustained high flows,<sup>14</sup> project generation is continuous and peaking operations are ceased. The Bellows Falls Project operations are coordinated with other TransCanada hydroelectric generating facilities on the Connecticut River, taking into consideration variations in demand for electricity as well as natural flow variations.

### 3.2.3 Vernon Project

#### 3.2.3.1 Facilities

The Vernon Project is located on the Connecticut River at RM 141.9, about 2 miles upstream of the Ashuelot River and 7.4 miles downstream of the West River. The dam is a composite overflow and non-overflow ogee type concrete gravity structure extending across the Connecticut River between Hinsdale, New Hampshire, and Vernon,

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<sup>12</sup> TransCanada, typically utilizes a 1.8 foot drawdown for its peaking operations.

<sup>13</sup> TransCanada usually provides the minimum flow of 1,300 cfs through one generating unit.

<sup>14</sup> Daily average flow at or above the facility's full hydraulic capacity.

Vermont. It is 956 feet long with a maximum height of 58 feet, and consists of the integral powerhouse with a sluice gate block section that is about 356 feet long, and a concrete overflow spillway section about 600 feet long. The maximum dam height is 58 feet. The impoundment extends upstream 26 miles from the dam and has a usable storage capacity of 18,300 acre-feet at an eight-foot drawdown from the normal full pond at elevation 220.1 feet msl, a surface area of approximately 2,550 acres at full pond and a drainage area of 6,266 mi<sup>2</sup>. The powerhouse is integral to the dam and contains ten turbine/generators with an authorized installed capacity of 32.4-MW which generated an average of 136,583 MWh annually from 2000 – 2011. The generating units consist of two 2.5-MW vertical Francis turbines with an approximate per unit hydraulic capacity of 1,465 cfs, two 2.5-MW vertical Francis turbines with an approximate per unit hydraulic capacity of 1,465 cfs at 35 feet of head, four 4-MW vertical Kaplan turbines with an approximate per unit hydraulic capacity of 1,800 cfs, and two 4.2-MW vertical Francis turbines with an approximate per unit hydraulic capacity of 2,035 cfs at 34 feet of head.

### 3.2.3.2 Operations

The project is operated as a load-following or peaking hydroelectric project, with a capability to utilize 18,300 acre-feet of storage (an 8-foot drawdown) for generation purposes.<sup>15</sup> During generation, downstream flows can vary between the required minimum flow of 1,250 cfs<sup>16</sup> and the facility's approximate full hydraulic capacity of 17,100 cfs. During periods of sustained high flows,<sup>17</sup> project generation is continuous and peaking operations are ceased. The Vernon Project operations are coordinated with other TransCanada hydroelectric generating facilities on the Connecticut River, taking into consideration variations in demand for electricity as well as natural flow variations.

## 3.3 FIRSTLIGHT'S PROJECT FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

### 3.3.1 Turners Falls Project

#### 3.3.1.1 Facilities

The Turners Falls dam is located on the Connecticut River at approximately RM 122 in the towns of Gill and Montague, Massachusetts. The dam consists of two individual concrete gravity dams, referred to as the Gill dam and Montague dam, which are connected by a natural rock island known as Great Island. The Montague dam is

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<sup>15</sup> TransCanada, typically utilizes a 2 foot drawdown for its peaking operations.

<sup>16</sup> Typically, TransCanada provides the minimum flow of 1,600 cfs through one generating unit.

<sup>17</sup> Daily average flow at or above the facility's full hydraulic capacity.

approximately 35 feet high and 630 feet long, is founded on bedrock and connects Great Island to the west bank of the Connecticut River. The Gill dam is approximately 55 feet high and 493 feet long extending from the Gill shoreline (east bank) to Great Island. The Turners Falls impoundment (which also serves as the lower reservoir for the Northfield Mountain Project), is approximately 20 miles long, extending upstream through the Connecticut River valley to the base of Vernon dam. The impoundment has a surface area of approximately 2,110 acres and a gross storage capacity of 21,500 acre-feet at elevation 185.0 feet msl (as measured at Turners Falls dam) and also serves as the lower reservoir for the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project. Most of the Turners Falls impoundment lies in Massachusetts; however, approximately 5.7 miles of the northern portion of the impoundment are located in New Hampshire and Vermont. At Turners Falls dam, the total drainage area is approximately 7,163 mi<sup>2</sup>, or about 64% of the Connecticut River Basin drainage area (11,250 mi<sup>2</sup>). The project includes two powerhouses, Station No. 1 and Cabot Station, which together have an authorized installed capacity of 67.709 MW which generated an average of 320,140 MWh annually from 2000-2009. Station No. 1 contains seven turbine/generators of which five are currently operational. Station No. 1 generating units consist of single runner vertical Francis turbines. The approximate turbine and hydraulic capacities of each unit are as follows: 2,100hp/560 cfs for Unit 1; 590hp/140 cfs for Unit 2; 1,900hp/500 cfs for Unit 3; Unit 4 is non-operational; 1,635hp/490 cfs for Unit 5; Unit 6 is non-operational; and 1,955hp/520 cfs for Unit 7. Cabot Station generating units consist of six vertical single runner Francis turbines. The approximate turbine and hydraulic capacities of each of the Cabot unit are 13,867hp/2,288 cfs.

### 3.3.1.2 Operations

The project is operated as a load-following or peaking hydroelectric project, and we estimate that it has the capability to utilize about 7,000 acre-feet of storage<sup>18</sup> for generation purposes.<sup>19</sup> The Turners Falls impoundment also serves as a lower reservoir to the Northfield Mountain Project. During generation downstream flows can vary between the required minimum flow of 1,433 cfs<sup>20</sup> and the facility's approximate full

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<sup>18</sup> We estimate the usable storage capacity of the Turners Falls Project impoundment to be no more than 16,050 acre-feet (at a 9-foot drawdown); however, the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project typically utilizes 12,318 acre-feet of this storage when filling its upper reservoir, resulting in about 3,700 acre-feet of usable storage for the Turners Falls Project generation.

<sup>19</sup> FirstLight, typically utilizes a 3.7 foot drawdown for its peaking operations.

<sup>20</sup> Typically, FirstLight maintains the minimum flow requirement through discharges at Cabot Station and/or Station No. 1. Compliance with FirstLight's minimum flow requirement is measured downstream of Cabot Station and is the sum of all project facilities' discharges.

hydraulic capacity of 15,938 cfs. During periods of sustained high flows, project generation is continuous and peaking operations are ceased. The Turners Falls Project's operations are coordinated with other FirstLight hydroelectric generating facilities on the Connecticut River, taking into consideration variations in demand for electricity as well as natural flow variations.

### **3.3.2 Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project**

#### **3.3.2.1 Facilities**

The tailrace of the Northfield Mountain Project is located approximately 5.2 miles upstream of Turners Falls dam, in the town of Northfield, Massachusetts, and in the Turners Falls impoundment. The upper reservoir of the Northfield Mountain Project is located atop Northfield Mountain in Erving, Massachusetts and consists of a main dam, rockfill dikes and a concrete gravity dam. The upper reservoir typically operates between elevations 1,000.5 feet msl and 938 msl which provides a 62.5 foot drawdown. Within this range of fluctuation, the upper reservoir has a surface area of 134 and 286 acres at elevations 938 and 1,000 feet msl, respectively, and approximately 12,318 acre-feet of usable storage. The underground powerhouse contains four reversible pump/turbines that operate at gross heads ranging from 753 to 824.5 msl. The project has an authorized installed capacity of 1,119.2 MW (Unit 1: 267.9 MW, Unit 2: 291.7 MW, Unit 3: 291.7 MW and Unit 4: 267.9 MW). The approximate station hydraulic capacity is 15,200 cfs (3,800 cfs per/pump) in pumping mode and 20,000 cfs (5,000 cfs per/turbine) in a generation mode.

#### **3.3.2.2 Operations**

The project is a pumped storage hydroelectric project, with a capability to utilize 12,318 acre-feet of storage (a 62.5-foot drawdown) for generation purposes. The project utilizes the Turners Falls impoundment as its lower reservoir. During pumping operations, water is pumped from the Turners Falls Impoundment to the upper reservoir. In the summer and winter seasons, the Northfield Mountain Project typically peaks twice a day - in the morning and late afternoon. During other months, commonly called shoulder months, the Northfield Mountain Project may be peaked one to two times a day, pending electrical demand and/or price. In both cases, water is typically pumped back to the upper reservoir during the night or during low energy priced hours. When operating in a pumping mode, the approximate hydraulic capacity of the project is 15,200 cfs. Alternatively, when operating in a generation mode, the approximate hydraulic capacity is 20,000 cfs.

### **3.4 LICENSEES' PROPOSALS**

TransCanada and FirstLight are in the process of evaluating their respective project facilities and operation to assess potential additions or modifications to increase power generation, improve efficiency, or reduce costs under a new license.

TransCanada and FirstLight are not currently proposing any new environmental measures at the projects.

#### **3.4.1 Proposed Facilities and Operation**

At this time, TransCanada is not proposing any changes to the licensed project facilities or operation at the Wilder, Bellows Falls or Vernon projects, but notes they will continue to evaluate upgrades as opportunities present themselves during the relicensing process.

FirstLight is evaluating a series of potential changes to facilities and operation of the Turners Falls and Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage projects during relicensing including the following:

- Upgrade Station No. 1 with new or rehabilitated turbines.
- Close Station No. 1 and adding a turbine generator at Cabot of similar hydraulic capacity to Station No. 1's.
- Use full hydraulic capacity of Cabot Station turbines.
- Utilize more storage in the Northfield Mountain Project's upper reservoir.
- Increase the unit and station capacity at the Northfield Mountain Project.

As the relicensing process proceeds, FirstLight will conduct further investigations to determine if potential modifications are feasible.

If TransCanada and/or FirstLight decide to include one or more facility upgrades in its application for a new license, studies may be needed to evaluate the potential effects of such upgrades on environmental resources.

#### **3.4.2 Licensees' Proposed Environmental Measures**

At this time, TransCanada and FirstLight have not proposed any changes to existing environmental measures (consisting of current license conditions and voluntary measures) and they do not propose any new measures. TransCanada and FirstLight propose to continue operating their perspective projects with the existing environmental protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) measures described in the following section.

### 3.4.2.1 Wilder Project

#### **Water Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Limit reservoir drawdown to elevation 380 feet (a 5-foot drawdown).
- Maintain a continuous minimum flow of 675 cfs (0.20 cubic feet per second per square mile of drainage basin).

##### *Voluntary Measures*

- Limit reservoir drawdown to 2.5 feet versus the allowed 5.0-foot drawdown.
- Limit reservoir drawdown rates to 3-tenths of a foot per hour.
- Provide a minimum instream flow of about 700 cfs (25 cfs above license requirement).

#### **Aquatic Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Provide upstream fish passage for migrating Atlantic salmon and American shad.
- Provide downstream fish passage for outmigrating fish.

#### **Recreation Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Operate and maintain a public viewing area with an observation deck and underwater window at upstream fish passage facility.
- Operate and maintain eight recreation facilities that include one car-top boat launch, two boat ramps, two angler access areas, one dock, one portage trail, one water trail campsite, two picnic areas, one natural area, a network of hiking trails, and an athletic field.

##### *Voluntary Measures*

- From the Friday before Memorial Day through the last weekend in September, maintain a minimum reservoir elevation of 382.5 feet from Fridays at 4 pm through Sundays at midnight and on holidays.

- Issue permits to a local government and educational institution to operate two recreation facilities that provide a recreation access, trail network, picnic area, athletic fields, and restrooms.

### 3.4.2.2 Bellows Falls Project

#### **Water Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Limit reservoir drawdown to elevation 288.63 feet (a 3-foot drawdown).
- Maintain a continuous minimum instream flow of 1,083 cfs.

##### *Voluntary Measures*

- Limit the typical reservoir drawdown to 2 feet versus the allowed 3 feet.
- Limit reservoir drawdown rates to three-tenths of a foot per hour.
- Provide a minimum instream flow of about 1,300 cfs (217 cfs above license requirement).

#### **Aquatic Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Maintain and operate an upstream vertical slotted weir fish ladder at the powerhouse and an upstream concrete barrier dam in the bypass reach.
- Provide downstream passage via the forebay sluiceway/skimmer gate.

#### **Recreation Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Operate and maintain a visitor center and underwater window at the upstream fish passage facility.
- Operate and maintain five recreation facilities that include one car-top boat launch, two boat ramps, one portage trail, and two picnic areas.

##### *Voluntary Measures*

- From the Friday before Memorial Day through the last weekend in September,



maintain a minimum reservoir elevation of 289.5 feet from Fridays at 4 pm through Sundays at midnight and on holidays.

- Issue permits to state and local governments to operate six recreation facilities that provide three car-top boat launches, three boat ramps, one fishing platform, and one marina.

### 3.4.2.3 Vernon Project

#### **Geology and Soil Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Develop and implement an erosion monitoring plan for the east bank below Vernon dam, with biennial monitoring.

#### **Water Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Maintain a continuous minimum instream flow of 1,250 cfs.
- Limit reservoir drawdown to an elevation of 212.13 feet (an 8-foot drawdown).

##### *Voluntary Measures*

- Limit the typical reservoir drawdown to 2 feet versus the allowed 8 feet.
- Limit reservoir drawdown rates to 3-tenths of a foot per hour.
- Provide a minimum instream flow of about 1,600 cfs (350 cfs above licensed requirement).

#### **Aquatic Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Maintain and operate an upstream fish passage facility designed to pass migrating Atlantic Salmon and American shad upstream past the dam, including a viewing, counting and trapping area.
- Provide downstream fish passage.

## **Recreation Resources**

### *Current License Requirements*

- Operate and maintain a visitor center and underwater window at upstream fish passage facility.
- Operate and maintain six recreation facilities that include one car-top boat launch, one boat ramp, one water trail campsite, one portage trail, one angler access area, one area of open space, and one picnic area.
- Provide potable water at Vernon Glen and Governor Hunt recreation facilities.

### *Voluntary Measures*

- From the Friday before Memorial Day through the last weekend in September, maintain a minimum reservoir elevation of 218.6 feet from Fridays at 4 pm through Sundays at midnight and on holidays.

## **Land Use**

### *Current License Requirements*

- Provide the Vernon Neck Demonstration Forest Area (an area designated as a natural area, with only limited public use).

## **Cultural Resources**

### *Current License Requirements*

- Provided photographic documentation of the powerhouse.
- Conducted digital video documentation at key stages of the project to record the removal of the original equipment and installation of the new equipment.

### *Voluntary Measures*

- Donates generating and electrical equipment removed from the powerhouse to museums and educational organizations.

### 3.4.2.4 Turners Falls Project

#### **Water Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Limit reservoir drawdown to elevation 176.0 feet (a 9-foot drawdown).
- Provide a minimum instream flow of 1,433 cfs (Modifications to this flow amount are required at various times of the year to address fisheries issues, as described in the following Aquatic Resources section).

##### *Voluntary Measures*

- Limit the typical reservoir drawdown to 3.7 feet versus the allowed 9 feet.

#### **Aquatic Resources**

##### *Current License Requirements*

- Operate and maintain three upstream fish passage facilities (Cabot fishway, the Spillway fishway, and the Gatehouse fishway) for Atlantic salmon and American shad.
- Provide a continuous minimum instream flow of 200 cfs in the bypass reach starting on May 1, and increase to 400 cfs when fish passage starts by releasing flow through a bascule gate at the dam.<sup>21</sup>

##### *Voluntary Measures*

- Provide downstream fish passage at Cabot Station from approximately April 1 through November 15.

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<sup>21</sup> The 400 cfs continuous minimum instream flow is provided through July 15, unless the upstream fish passage season has concluded early, in which case the 400 cfs flow is reduced to 120 cfs to protect shortnose sturgeon. The 120 cfs continuous minimum instream flow is maintained in the bypass reach from the date the upstream fishways are closed (or by July 16) until the river temperature drops below 7°C, which typically occurs around November 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **Recreation Resources**

### *Current License Requirements*

- Operate and maintain two parks and other access areas at the project; facilities include one canoe portage, one tailwater fishing facility, one trail, two picnic areas, and one interpretive display.

## **Land Use**

### *Voluntary Measures*

- Granted permissions for non-project uses of project lands in accordance with the provisions of the Turners Falls and Northfield projects' licenses. These non-project uses include uses of project lands for a parking area, the Conte Fish Lab, a fire pond, a privately owned boat club, private camps, landscaping activities, agricultural uses, communications antennas, docks, a NPDES discharge, and water withdrawals.

### 3.4.2.5 Northfield Mountain Project

## **Geology and Soil Resources**

### *Current License Requirements*

- Monitor and remediate stream bank erosion within the Turners Falls impoundment.

## **Aquatic Resources**

### *Current License Requirements*

- Deploy a fixed-position guide net to reduce entrainment of Atlantic salmon smolts at the project's lower reservoir intake.

## **Terrestrial Resources**

### *Current License Requirements*

- Manage the Bennett Meadow Wildlife Management Area for the compatible use of the land for agricultural and wildlife management purposes.

## **Recreation Resources**

### *Current License Requirements*

- Operate and maintain four parks and other access areas at the project; facilities include two hunting areas, two campgrounds with 30 campsites and one group camp, 20 trails (32 miles of trail), and a winter sport area.

## **3.5 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION**

Commission staff will consider and assess all alternative recommendations for operational or facility modifications, as well as PM&E measures identified by the Commission, the agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and the public.

## **3.6 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY**

At present, we propose to eliminate the following alternatives from detailed study in the EIS.

### **3.6.1 Federal Government Takeover**

In accordance with § 16.14 of the Commission's regulations, a federal department or agency may file a recommendation that the United States exercise its right to take over a hydroelectric power project with a license that is subject to sections 14 and 15 of the FPA.<sup>22</sup> We do not consider federal takeover to be a reasonable alternative. Federal takeover of the project would require congressional approval. While that fact alone would not preclude further consideration of this alternative, there is currently no evidence showing that federal takeover should be recommended to Congress. No party has suggested that federal takeover would be appropriate, and no federal agency has expressed interest in operating any of these five projects.

### **3.6.2 Non-power License**

A non-power license is a temporary license the Commission would terminate whenever it determines that another governmental agency is authorized and willing to assume regulatory authority and supervision over the lands and facilities covered by the non-power license. At this time, no governmental agency has suggested a willingness or ability to take over any of these five projects. No party has sought a non-power license, and we have no basis for concluding that the TransCanada and FirstLight projects should

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<sup>22</sup> 16 U.S.C. §§ 791(a)-825(r).

no longer be used to produce power. Thus, we do not consider a non-power license a reasonable alternative to relicensing the projects.

### **3.6.3 Project Decommissioning**

Decommissioning of the projects could be accomplished with or without dam removal. Either alternative would require denying the relicense application and surrender or termination of the existing license with appropriate conditions. There would be significant costs involved with decommissioning the project and/or removing any project facilities. The project provides a viable, safe, and clean renewable source of power to the region. With decommissioning, the project would no longer be authorized to generate power.

No party has suggested project decommissioning would be appropriate in this case, and we have no basis for recommending it. Thus, we do not consider project decommissioning a reasonable alternative to relicensing the projects with appropriate environmental measures.

## **4.0 SCOPE OF CUMULATIVE EFFECTS AND SITE-SPECIFIC RESOURCE ISSUES**

### **4.1 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS**

According to the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing NEPA (40 C.F.R. 1508.7), a cumulative effect is the effect on the environment that results from the incremental effect of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time, including hydropower and other land and water development activities.

#### **4.1.1 Resources that could be Cumulatively Affected**

Based on information in the Pre-Application Documents and preliminary staff analysis, we identified the following resources that may be cumulatively affected by the proposed operation and maintenance of the five Connecticut River Projects: water quality and quantity (including power generation), fishery resources (including anadromous and catadromous fish), and rare, threatened and endangered species. By this document, we are asking for recommendations on resources that may be affected cumulatively at all five Connecticut River projects. Additionally, as discussed in Section 2.0, we will hold a public scoping meeting specifically to discuss potential cumulative effects of all five Connecticut River Projects and to help identify the incremental effect of

the licensing of the Connecticut River projects with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the Connecticut River Basin.

#### **4.1.2 Geographic Scope**

Our geographic scope of analysis for cumulatively affected resources is defined by the physical limits or boundaries of: (1) the proposed action's effect on the resources, and (2) contributing effects from other hydropower and non-hydropower activities within the Connecticut River Basin. Because the proposed actions would affect the resources differently, the geographic scope for each resource may vary.

The five Connecticut River Projects are located contiguously on the main stem Connecticut River between RM 262 and RM 122. There are other hydroelectric projects and five large storage projects in the upper Connecticut River basin. The storage projects operate to increase low flows in the summer and include First Connecticut Lake, Second Connecticut Lake, Lake Francis, Moore Reservoir and Comerford Reservoir. While augmenting flows in the river during summer months, these storage projects have resulted in the conversion of a substantial amount of lotic (river-type) habitats in the basin to lentic (lake-type) habitats, which may have led to higher summer water temperatures and changes in the structure of fish communities. The dams have also affected sediment and large woody debris transport, which are important elements of fish habitat. Other contributors to effects on aquatic resources in the basin include operation of the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant, some urbanization, road and railroad construction, and timber harvest. As such, we have tentatively identified the main stem of the Connecticut River from the Wilder Project downstream as having resources that may be cumulatively affected by the Connecticut River Projects. However, we still are seeking input on the appropriate extent of the downstream geographic scope of analysis for aquatic and water resources.

For any resources that commenters recommend we analyze for cumulative effects, we are asking them to also recommend the geographic scope they think appropriate.

#### **4.1.3 Temporal Scope**

The temporal scope of our cumulative effects analysis in the EIS will include a discussion of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions and their effects on each resource that could be cumulatively affected. Based on the potential term of a new license, the temporal scope will look 30 to 50 years into the future, concentrating on the effect on the resources from reasonably foreseeable future actions. The historical discussion will, by necessity, be limited to the amount of available information for each resource. The quality and quantity of information, however, diminishes as we analyze resources further away in time from the present.

## **4.2 TRANSCANADA'S WILDER, BELLOWS FALLS AND VERNON PROJECT RESOURCE ISSUES**

Environmental issues and concerns initially identified by the staff for TransCanada's Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon projects are presented below. This identification of issues and concerns is not intended to be exhaustive or final, but is an initial listing of issues we have identified. For convenience, the issues have been listed by resource area and those issues identified by an asterisk (\*) will be analyzed for both cumulative and project effects.

### **4.2.1 Geology and Soil Resources**

- Effect of projects' operation and maintenance on river bank erosion (including the potential effects on protected species, cultural resources or the structural integrity of adjacent facilities (such as the narrow neck of land separating the Vernon impoundment from the tailwater, located to the east of the powerhouse and spillway).\*

### **4.2.2 Water Resources**

- Effects of current and proposed project operations on water quantity.\*
- Effects of project operations on water quality, particularly on dissolved oxygen and temperature (including cumulative effects from the operation of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant).\*

### **4.2.3 Aquatic Resources**

- Effects of project operations and maintenance (including fluctuations in water levels and flow releases) on aquatic habitat and resources in the project vicinity (e.g., resident and migratory fish populations; fish spawning, rearing, feeding, and overwintering habitats; mussels and macroinvertebrate populations and habitat).
- Effects of project facilities and operations, (including reservoir fluctuations, and generation releases) on fish migration through and within project fishways, reservoirs, and the downstream riverine corridor.\*
- Effects of entrainment on fish populations.\*



#### **4.2.4 Terrestrial Resources**

- Effects of project fluctuations in water levels and flow releases from the projects on riparian, wetland, and littoral vegetation community types and the spread of invasive species as a result of project operations along the shoreline of the projects.
- Effects of project operation & maintenance (O&M) activities (e.g., road and facility maintenance) and project-related recreation on wildlife habitat and wildlife.
- Effects of project O&M on riverbank integrity and shoreline erosion along the project reservoir and stream reaches and its potential effects on riparian vegetation.
- Effects of the frequency, timing, amplitude and duration of reservoir fluctuations on waterfowl and on riparian and wetland habitats.
- Effects of project O&M and project-related recreation on bald eagles and their habitat.

#### **4.2.5 Threatened and Endangered Species**

- Effects of project operations, including reservoir and downstream flow fluctuations, on aquatic species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) (e.g., dwarf wedgemussel, puritan tiger beetle, and jesup's milk vetch).\*
- Effects of project operations, including reservoir and downstream flow fluctuations, on wildlife and plant species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA (i.e., puritan tiger beetle and jesup's milk vetch).
- Effects of project maintenance activities on plants and wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA (e.g., dwarf wedgemussel, puritan tiger beetle, and Jesup's milk vetch).

#### **4.2.6 Recreation**

- Adequacy of existing recreation and public use facilities in meeting existing and future regional public use and river access needs.

- Effects of project operations on quality and availability of flow-dependent and water level-dependent recreation opportunities, including boating.
- Adequacy of structural integrity, physical capacity, and/or management methods to support recreation use at existing facilities.

#### **4.2.7 Land Use**

- Adequacy of existing shoreline management policies and programs to control non-project use of project lands.
- Adequacy of shoreline buffers to achieve project purposes and compliance with local and state requirements.

#### **4.2.8 Aesthetic Resources**

- At this time we have not identified any Aesthetic Resource issues.

#### **4.2.9 Socioeconomic Resources**

- At this time we have not identified any Socioeconomic Resource issues.

#### **4.2.10 Cultural Resources**

- Effects of the projects on historic, archeological, and traditional cultural resources that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

#### **4.2.11 Developmental Resources**

- Effects of potential operational changes on the energy and capacity benefits of the projects and effects of protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures on the cost of project power.\*

### **4.3 FIRSTLIGHT'S TURNERS FALLS AND NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN PUMPED STORAGE PROJECT RESOURCE ISSUES**

Environmental issues and concerns initially identified by the staff for FirstLight's Turners Falls Project and Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project are presented below. This identification of issues and concerns is not intended to be exhaustive or final, but is an initial listing of issues we have identified. For convenience, the issues have been listed by resource area and those issues identified by an asterisk (\*) will be analyzed for both cumulative and project effects.

### **4.3.1 Geology and Soil Resources**

- Effects of project induced water level fluctuations in Turners Falls impoundment, on shoreline stability and river bank erosion, particularly where erosion might impact protected plant species, critical wildlife habitat, adjacent structures, recreational use facilities and/or private landowners within the project boundary.
- Effects of Turners Falls Project operation on river bank erosion in the bypass reach and downstream of Cabot Station.

### **4.3.2 Water Resources**

- Effects of current and proposed project operations on water quantity (including power generation).\*
- Effects of project operations on water quality, particularly on dissolved oxygen and temperature.\*

### **4.3.3 Aquatic Resources**

- Effects of project operations (including fluctuations in water levels, and downstream releases) on aquatic habitat and resources in the projects' vicinity (e.g., resident and migratory fish populations; fish spawning, rearing, feeding, and overwintering habitats; mussels and macroinvertebrate populations and habitat).\*
- Effects of project facilities and operations, (including reservoir fluctuations, and generation releases) on fish migration through and within project fishways, reservoirs, and the downstream riverine corridor.
- Effects of entrainment on fish populations at each project.\*

### **4.3.4 Terrestrial Resources**

- Effects of project fluctuations in water levels and flow releases from the projects on riparian, wetland, and littoral vegetation community types and the spread of invasive species as a result of project operations along the shoreline of the projects.
- Effects of project operation & maintenance (O&M) activities (e.g., road and facility maintenance) and project-related recreation on wildlife habitat and wildlife.

- Effects of project O&M on riverbank integrity and shoreline erosion along the project reservoir and stream reaches and its potential effects on riparian vegetation.
- Effects of the frequency, timing, amplitude and duration of reservoir fluctuations on waterfowl and on riparian and wetland habitats.
- Effects of project O&M and project-related recreation on bald eagles and their habitat.

#### **4.3.5 Threatened and Endangered Species**

- Effects of project fluctuations and releases from the project on aquatic species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal ESA (i.e., shortnose sturgeon and dwarf wedgemussel).\*
- Effects of project fluctuations and releases from the project on wildlife and plant species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA (i.e., northern bulrush).
- Effects of maintenance and use of project recreation facilities on plants and wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA (i.e., northern bulrush).
- Effects of project O&M activities on plants and wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

#### **4.3.6 Recreation**

- Adequacy of existing recreation and public use facilities in meeting existing and future regional public use and river access needs.
- Effects of project operations on quality and availability of flow-dependent and water level-dependent recreation opportunities, including boating.
- Adequacy of structural integrity, physical capacity, and/or management methods to support recreation use at existing facilities.

#### **4.3.7 Land Use**

- Adequacy of existing shoreline management policies and programs to control non-project use of project lands.

- Adequacy of shoreline buffers to achieve project purposes and compliance with local and state requirements.

#### **4.3.8 Aesthetic Resources**

- At this time we have not identified any Aesthetic Resource issues.

#### **4.3.9 Socioeconomic Resources**

- At this time we have not identified any Socioeconomic Resource issues.

#### **4.3.10 Cultural Resources**

- Effects of the projects on historic, archeological, and traditional cultural resources that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

#### **4.3.11 Developmental Resources**

- Effects of potential operational changes on the energy and capacity benefits of the projects and effects of protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures on the cost of project power.\*

### **5.0 Proposed Studies**

Depending upon the findings of studies completed by the licensees and the recommendations of the consulted entities, the licensees will consider, and may propose certain other measures to enhance environmental resources affected by the project as part of the proposed action. Initial study proposals from TransCanada and FirstLight are identified by resource area in Table 1 and detailed information on these initial study proposals can be found in the respective PADs. Further studies may need to be added to this list based on comments provided to the Commission and the licensees from agencies, Indian tribes and interested parties during the study scoping process.

**Table 1. Initial Study Proposals by Project Applicant (Source: October 31, 2012 PADs)**

<b>TransCanada's Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon Project's</b>	
<b>Resource Area and Issue</b>	<b>Applicant's Proposed Study</b>
Water Resources	Develop a system operations model to assist in the evaluation of project effects.  2011-2012 Water Quality report forthcoming.
Cultural Resources	Conduct future studies at Wilder and Bellows Falls, as needed, pending comments from the SHPOs on 2012 Phase 1A report.
<b>First Light's Northfield Mountain and Turners Falls Project's</b>	
<b>Resource Area and Issue</b>	<b>Applicant's Proposed Study</b>
Water Resources	Collect continuous and monthly <i>in-situ</i> water quality data at the Turners Falls impoundment and Northfield Mountain upper reservoir to assess the effects of Turners Falls Project operations on water quality (dissolved oxygen and temperature).
Aquatic Resources	Conduct an Instream Flow Habitat Assessment in the Turners Falls Project bypass reach and downstream of Cabot Station to assess project operational effects on the "zone of fish passage" and aquatic habitat, including an evaluation of project operations on shortnose sturgeon spawning.  Using existing information, evaluate the need for improvements to existing upstream and downstream fish passage measures for American Shad and American

Eel.

Terrestrial Resources

Perform field verification of National Wetland Inventory mapping in the Turners Falls Project area.

Conduct field survey of wildlife and botanical species/habitat (including rare, threatened, and endangered species and critical habitat) at Turners Falls impoundment, bypass reach, and downstream of Cabot Station.

Recreation and Land Use

Conduct a recreational use/user contact survey to establish the amount of recreation use and user opinion of recreational opportunities.

Conduct a recreation facilities inventory and assessment to evaluate all recreation project recreation facilities.

Conduct a land use classification/inventory

Cultural Resources

Conduct a Phase 1A background literature review of previous cultural resources study reports, development of archaeological sensitivity models and focused field reconnaissance studies. FirstLight has also indicated that a Phase IB archaeological survey may be warranted pending the results of consultation with the SHPOs.

Conduct a reconnaissance level architectural assessment of the project and resources within its viewshed.

Developmental Resources

Develop an operations model to evaluate system operations optimization and inflow models to assess projects operational effects on power generation and other

resources.

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## 6.0 REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND STUDIES

We are asking federal, state, and local resource agencies; Indian tribes; NGOs; and the public to forward to the Commission any information that will assist us in conducting an accurate and thorough analysis of the project-specific and cumulative effects associated with relicensing the TransCanada and FirstLight projects. The types of information requested include, but are not limited to:

- information, quantitative data, or professional opinions that may help define the geographic and temporal scope of the analysis (both site-specific and cumulative effects), and that helps identify significant environmental issues;
- identification of, and information from, any other EA, EIS, or similar environmental study (previous, on-going, or planned) relevant to the proposed relicensing of these five Connecticut River projects;
- existing information and any data that would help to describe the past and present actions and effects of the project and other developmental activities on environmental and socioeconomic resources;
- information that would help characterize the existing environmental conditions and habitats;
- the identification of any federal, state, or local resource plans, and any future project proposals in the affected resource area (e.g., proposals to construct or operate water treatment facilities, recreation areas, water diversions, timber harvest activities, or fish management programs), along with any implementation schedules);
- documentation that the proposed project would or would not contribute to cumulative adverse or beneficial effects on any resources. Documentation can include, but need not be limited to, how the project would interact with other projects in the area and other developmental activities; study results; resource management policies; and reports from federal and state agencies, local agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and the public;
- documentation showing why any resources should be excluded from further study or consideration; and



- study requests by federal and state agencies, local agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and the public that would help provide a framework for collecting pertinent information on the resource areas under consideration necessary for the Commission to prepare the EIS for the project.

All requests for studies filed with the Commission must meet the criteria found in Appendix A, *Study Plan Criteria*.

The requested information, comments, and study requests should be submitted to the Commission no later than **March 1, 2013**. All filings must clearly identify the following on the first page as appropriate: **Wilder Project No. 1892-026, Bellows Falls Project No. 1855-045, Vernon Project No. 1904-073, Turners Falls Project No. 1889-081) and/or Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project No. 2485-063**. Scoping comments may be filed electronically via the Internet. See 18 C.F.R. 385.2001(a)(1)(iii) and the instructions on the Commission's website <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/efiling.asp>. Commenters can submit brief comments up to 6,000 characters, without prior registration, using the eComment system at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/ecomment.asp>. You must include your name and contact information at the end of your comments. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at [FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov) or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659. Although the Commission strongly encourages electronic filing, documents may also be paper-filed. To paper-file, mail an original and seven copies to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20426.

Register online at <http://www.ferc.gov/esubscription.asp> to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to this or other pending projects. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support. <mailto:fercoNLINEsUKPPORT@FERC.GOV>

Any questions concerning the scoping meetings, site visits, or how to file written comments with the Commission should be directed to Ken Hogan at (202) 502-8434 or [Kenneth.Hogan@ferc.gov](mailto:Kenneth.Hogan@ferc.gov). Additional information about the Commission's licensing process and these five Connecticut River Projects may be obtained from the Commission's website, [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov).

## 7.0 EIS PREPARATION SCHEDULE

At this time, we anticipate the need to prepare an EIS. The draft EIS will be sent to all persons and entities on the Commission's service and mailing lists for these five projects. The EIS will include our recommendations for operating procedures, as well as PM&E measures that should be part of any license issued by the Commission. All

recipients will then have 60 days to review the EIS and file written comments with the Commission. All comments on the draft EIS filed with the Commission will be considered in preparation of the final EIS.

The major milestones, including those for preparing the EIS, are as follows:

<u>Major Milestone</u>	<u>Target Date</u>
Scoping Meetings	January 2013
License Applications Filed	April 2016
Ready for Environmental Analysis Notice Issued	June 2016
Deadline for Filing Comments, Recommendations, and Agency Terms and Conditions/Prescriptions	August 2016
Draft EIS Issued	March 2017
Comments on Draft EIS Due	May 2017
Deadline for Filing Modified Agency Recommendations	June 2017
Final EIS Issued	September 2017

If Commission staff determines that there is a need for additional information or additional studies, the issuance of the Ready for Environmental Analysis notice could be delayed. If this occurs, all subsequent milestones would be delayed by the time allowed for the licensees to respond to the Commission's request. A copy of TransCanada's and FirstLight's process plans (as modified by Commission Staff) include a complete list of the relicensing milestones for the five Connecticut River projects involved in this relicensing, including those for developing the license applications, and are attached as Appendix B to this SD1.

## **8.0 PROPOSED EIS OUTLINE**

The preliminary outline for the Connecticut River Projects' EIS is as follows:

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## 9.0 COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Section 10(a)(2) of the FPA, 16 U.S.C. section 803(a)(2)(A), requires the Commission to consider the extent to which a project is consistent with federal and state comprehensive plans for improving, developing, or conserving a waterway or waterways affected by a project. The staff has initially identified the plans listed below that may be relevant to the projects. Agencies are requested to review this list and inform the Commission staff of any changes. If there are other comprehensive plans that should be considered for this list that are not on file with the Commission, or if there are more recent versions of the plans already listed, they can be filed for consideration with the Commission according to 18 CFR 2.19 of the Commission's regulations. Please follow the instructions for filing a plan at <http://www.ferc.gov/industries/hydropower/gen-info/licensing/complan.pdf>.

The following is a list of comprehensive plans currently on file with the Commission that may be relevant to the TransCanada and/or FirstLight projects.

### Massachusetts

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 1995. Interstate fishery management plan for Atlantic striped bass. (Report No. 24). March 1995.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 1998. Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*). (Report No. 31). July 1998.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 1998. Interstate fishery management plan for Atlantic striped bass. (Report No. 34). January 1998.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 1999. Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for shad and river herring. (Report No. 35). April 1999.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2000. Technical Addendum 1 to Amendment 1 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for shad and river herring. February 9, 2000.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2009. Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for shad and river herring, Arlington, Virginia. May 2009.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2010. Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for shad and river herring, Arlington, Virginia. February 2010.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2000. Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*). (Report No. 36). April 2000.

Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission. 1992. A management plan for American shad in the Connecticut River Basin. Sunderland, Massachusetts. February 1992.

Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission. 1998. Strategic plan for the restoration of Atlantic salmon in the Connecticut River. Sunderland, Massachusetts. July 1998. 106 pp.

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Quality Engineering. 1983. Connecticut River Basin water quality management plan. Westborough, Massachusetts. June 1983. 95 pp.

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): Massachusetts Outdoor 2006. Boston, Massachusetts.

National Marine Fisheries Service. 1998. Final Amendment #11 to the Northeast Multi-species Fishery Management Plan; Amendment #9 to the Atlantic sea scallop Fishery Management Plan; Amendment #1 to the monkfish Fishery Management Plan; Amendment #1 to the Atlantic salmon Fishery Management Plan; and Components of the proposed Atlantic herring Fishery Management Plan for Essential Fish Habitat. Volume 1. October 7, 1998.

National Marine Fisheries Service. 1998. Final Recovery Plan for the shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*). Prepared by the Shortnose Sturgeon Recovery Team for the National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland. December 1998.

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## 10.0 MAILING LIST

The list below is the Commission's official mailing list for the TransCanada and FirstLight projects included in this scoping document. If you want to receive future mailings for this proceeding and are not included in the list below, please send your request by email to [efiling@ferc.gov](mailto:efiling@ferc.gov) or by mail to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. All written and emailed requests to be added to the mailing list must clearly identify the following on the first page as appropriate: **Wilder Project No. 1892-026, Bellows Falls Project No. 1855-045, Vernon Project No. 1904-073, Turners Falls Project No. 1889-081) and/or Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project No. 2485-063.** You may use the same method if requesting removal from the mailing list.

Register online at <http://www.ferc.gov/esubscribenow.htm> to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to this or other pending projects. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at [FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov) or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**STUDY PLAN CRITERIA**  
**18 CFR Section 5.9(b)**

Any information or study request must contain the following:

1. Describe the goals and objectives of each study proposal and the information to be obtained;
2. If applicable, explain the relevant resource management goals of the agencies or Indian tribes with jurisdiction over the resource to be studied;
3. If the requester is not a resource agency, explain any relevant public interest considerations in regard to the proposed study;
4. Describe existing information concerning the subject of the study proposal, and the need for additional information;
5. Explain any nexus between project operations and effects (direct, indirect, and/or cumulative) on the resource to be studied, and how the study results would inform the development of license requirements;
6. Explain how any proposed study methodology (including any preferred data collection and analysis techniques, or objectively quantified information, and a schedule including appropriate filed season(s) and the duration) is consistent with generally accepted practice in the scientific community or, as appropriate, considers relevant tribal values and knowledge; and
7. Describe considerations of level of effort and cost, as applicable, and why proposed alternative studies would not be sufficient to meet the stated information needs.

## APPENDIX B

### PROCESS PLAN AND SCHEDULE FOR THE ILP RELICENSING OF WILDER, BELLOWS FALLS, VERNON, NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN AND TURNERS FALLS PROJECTS

(shaded milestones are unnecessary if there are no study disputes; if due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the due date is the following business day)

18 C.F.R.	Lead	Activity	Timeframe	Deadline
§ 5.5(a)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	Filing of NOI		10/31/2012
§ 5.6(a)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	Filing of PAD		10/31/2012
§ 5.7	FERC	Initial Tribal Consultation Meeting	Within 30 Days of filing NOI and PAD	Pending
§5.8	FERC	FERC Issues Notice of Commencement of Proceeding and Scoping Document (SD1) and requests to Initiate Informal Consultation under Section 7 of the ESA Consultation and section 106 of the NHPA	Within 60 days of filing NOI and PAD	12/21/2012
§5.8 (b)(3) (viii)	FERC/ Stakeholders	Public Scoping Meetings	Within 30 days of NOI and PAD notice and issuance of SD1	1/28 to - 1/31/2013
§ 5.9	FERC/ Stakeholders	File Comments on PAD, SD1, and Study Requests	Within 60 days of NOI and PAD notice and issuance of SD1	3/1/2013
§5.10	FERC	FERC Issues Scoping Document 2 (SD2) (if necessary)	Within 45 days of deadline for filing comments on SD1	4/15/2013
§5.11(a)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Proposed Study Plans	Within 45 days of deadline for filing comments on SD1	4/15/2013
§5.11(e)	TransCanada/ FirstLight/ Stakeholders	Study Plan Meetings	Within 30 days of deadline for filing proposed Study Plans	5/15/2013
§5.12	Stakeholders	File Comments on Proposed Study Plan	Within 90 days after proposed study plan is filed	7/14/2013
§5.13(a)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Revised Study Plan	Within 30 days following the deadline for filing comments on proposed Study Plan	8/13/2013

<b>18 C.F.R.</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
§5.13(b)	Stakeholders	File Comments on Revised Study Plan (if necessary)	Within 15 days following Revised Study Plan	8/28/2013
§5.13(c)	FERC	FERC Issues Study Plan Determination	Within 30 days following Revised Study Plan	9/12/2013
§5.14(a)	Mandatory Conditioning Agencies	Notice of Formal Study Dispute (if necessary)	Within 20 days of Study Plan determination	10/2/2013
§5.14(l)	FERC	Study Dispute Determination	Within 70 days of notice of formal study dispute	12/11/2013
§5.15(a)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	Conduct First Season Field Studies	Spring/summer 2014	
§5.15 (b)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Study Progress Reports	Spring/summer 2014	
§5.15(c)(1)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Initial Study Reports	No later than one year from Study Plan approval	9/12/2014
§5.15(c)(2)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	Initial Study Results Meeting	Within 15 days of Initial Study Report	9/27/2014
§5.15(c)(3)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Study Results Meeting Summary	Within 15 days of Study Results Meeting	10/12/2014
§5.15(c)(4)	Stakeholders/ FERC	File Meeting Summary – Disagreements/Modifications to Study/Propose New Studies	Within 30 days of filing Meeting Summary	11/11/2014
§5.15(c)(5)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Responses to Disagreements	Within 30 days of disputes	12/11/2014
§5.15(c)(6)	FERC	Resolution of Disagreements (if necessary)	Within 30 days of filing responses to disputes	1/10/2015
§5.15	TransCanada/ FirstLight	Conduct Second Season Field Studies	Spring/summer 2015	
§5.15 (f)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Updated Study Reports	No later than two years from Study Plan approval	9/12/2015
§5.15(c)(2)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	Second Study Results Meeting	Within 15 days of Updated Study Report	9/27/2015
§5.15(c)(3)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Study Results Meeting Summary	With 15 days of Study Results Meeting	10/12/2015
§5.15(c)(4)	Stakeholders / FERC	File Meeting Summary Disagreements/ Modifications to Study Requests, Requests for New Studies	Within 30 days of filing Meeting Summary	11/11/2015
§5.15(c)(5)	TransCanada/First Light/ Stakeholders	File Responses to Disagreements (if necessary)	Within 30 days of disputes	12/11/2015
§5.15(c)(6)	FERC	Resolution of Disagreements (if necessary)	Within 30 days of filing responses to disagreements	1/10/2016

<b>18 C.F.R.</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
§5.16(a)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	File Preliminary Licensing Proposal (or Draft License Application) with the FERC and distribute to Stakeholders	Not later than 150 days before final application is filed	12/4/2015
§5.16 (e)	FERC / Stakeholders	Comments on TransCanada Preliminary Licensing Proposal, Additional Information Request (if necessary)	Within 90 days of filing Preliminary Licensing Proposal (or Draft License Application)	3/3/2016
§5.17 (a)	TransCanada/ FirstLight	License Applications Filed		4/30/2016



Document Content(s)

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