

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Washington, DC 20426

June 4, 2014

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 2685-026 – New York  
Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Project  
New York Power Authority

**Subject: Scoping Document 1 for Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Project, P-2685**

To the Party Addressed:

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) is currently reviewing the Pre-Application Document submitted by the New York Power Authority (NYPA) for relicensing the Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Project (Blenheim-Gilboa Project or project) (FERC No. 2685). The Blenheim-Gilboa Project is located on Schoharie Creek in Schoharie County, New York. The project is not located on federal lands.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, Commission staff intends to prepare an environmental assessment (EA), which will be used by the Commission to determine whether, and under what conditions, to issue a new license for the project. To support and assist our environmental review, we are beginning the public scoping process to ensure that all pertinent issues are identified and analyzed, and that the EA 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 the Blenheim-Gilboa Project. We are also soliciting your comments and suggestions on our preliminary list of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EA. 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 EA for the project.

We will hold two scoping meetings for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project to receive input on the scope of the EA. An evening meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, July 7, 2014, at the Gilboa-Conesville Central School in Gilboa, New York. A daytime meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 9, 2014, at the Best Western Inn in Cobleskill, New York. We will visit the project facilities on Tuesday, July 8, 2014

starting at 9:00 a.m. Participants must RSVP by June 30, 2014 to visit the project facilities. Section 2.2, *COMMENTS, SCOPING MEETINGS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SITE REVIEW*, of the scoping document contains information on how to RSVP and the requirements to be followed while at the project facilities.

We invite all interested agencies, Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals to attend one or all of these meetings. Further information on our environmental site review and scoping meetings is available in the enclosed SD1.

SD1 is being mailed to both NYPA's distribution list and the Commission's official mailing list (see section 9.0 of the attached SD1). If you wish to be added to, removed from, or have your entry corrected on 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 added to, removed from, or have your entry corrected on the mailing list and must clearly identify the following on the first page: **Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Project No. 2685-026**.

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 EA for this project, please contact Andy Bernick at (202) 502-8660 or [andrew.bernick@ferc.gov](mailto:andrew.bernick@ferc.gov). Additional information about the Commission's licensing process and the Blenheim-Gilboa Project may be obtained from our website, [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov), or NYPA's licensing website, [www.bg.nypa.gov/](http://www.bg.nypa.gov/).

Enclosure: Scoping Document 1

cc: Mailing List  
Public Files

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SCOPING DOCUMENT 1  
BLENHEIM-GILBOA PUMPED STORAGE PROJECT  
NEW YORK

PROJECT NO. 2685-026

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

June 2014

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# SCOPING DOCUMENT 1

## Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Project, No. 2685-026

### 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 April 10, 2014, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) filed a Pre-Application Document (PAD) and Notice of Intent to seek a new license for the Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Project (Blenheim-Gilboa Project or project) (FERC Project No. 2685).<sup>2</sup> The Blenheim-Gilboa Project is located on Schoharie Creek, a tributary of the Mohawk River, in Schoharie County, New York. The Blenheim-Gilboa Project is located in the towns of Blenheim and Gilboa in Schoharie County, New York (figure 1). The Blenheim-Gilboa Project is not located on federal lands.

The Blenheim-Gilboa Project is a pumped storage project with four pump-turbine/motor generating units, with a total plant capacity of 1,160 megawatts (MW). The average annual generation during the years 2002 to 2012 was 619,467 megawatt-hours (MWh), and the average annual pumping consumption during the same period was 924,424 MWh.<sup>3</sup> A detailed description of the project is provided in section 3.0.

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

<sup>2</sup> The current license for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project was issued on June 6, 1969, and expires on April 30, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> During the years 2006 to 2010, one pump-turbine generating unit was out of service each year for refurbishment.

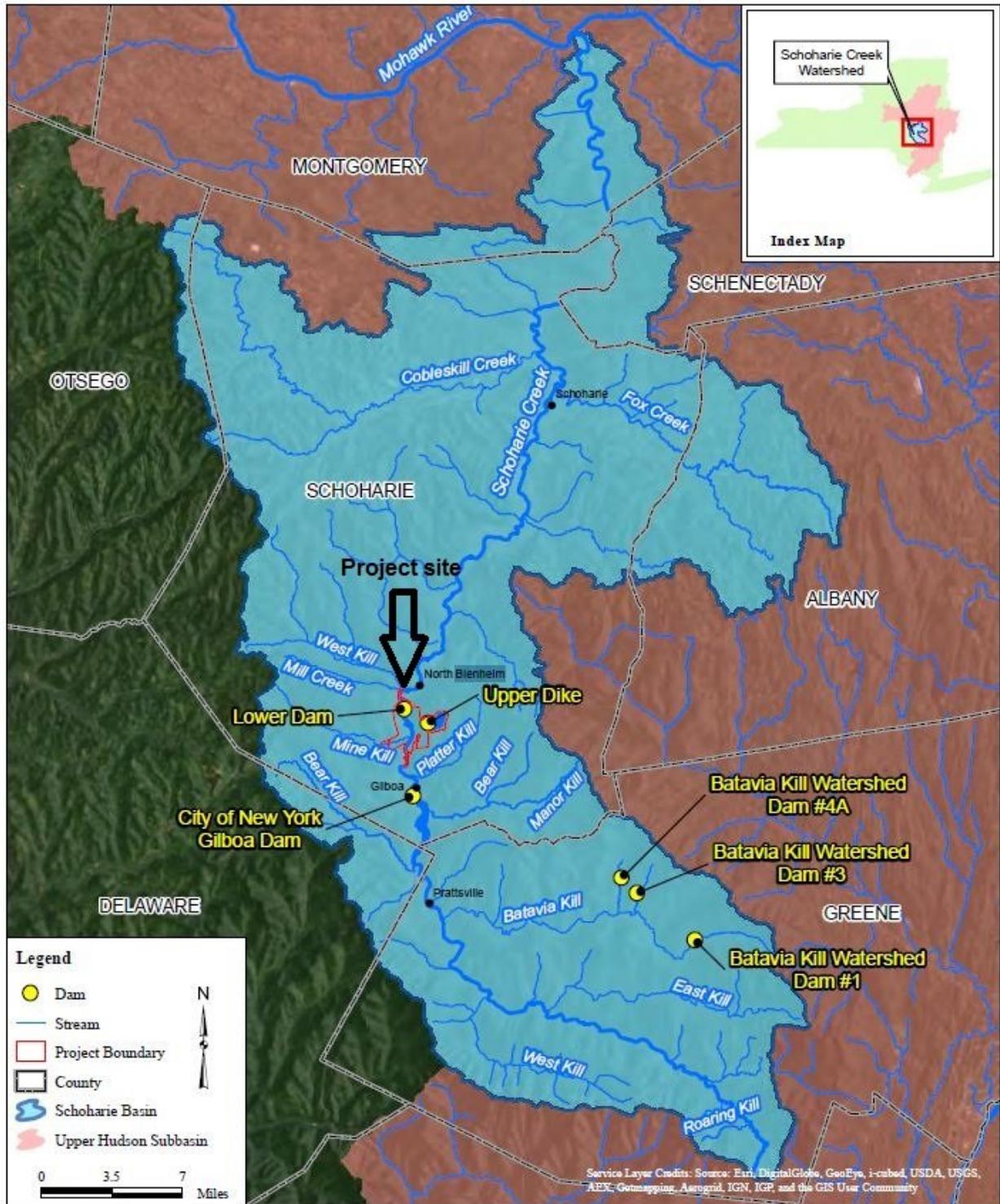


Figure 1. Location of the Blenheim-Gilboa Project within the Schoharie Creek watershed (Source: Pre-Application Document (PAD), as modified by staff).

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969,<sup>4</sup> the Commission's regulations, and other applicable laws require that we independently evaluate the environmental effects of relicensing the Blenheim-Gilboa Project as proposed, and also consider reasonable alternatives to the licensee's proposed action. At this time, we intend to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that describes and evaluates the probable effects, including an assessment of the site-specific and cumulative effects, if any, of the proposed action and alternatives. The EA preparation will be supported by a scoping process to ensure identification and analysis of all pertinent issues. Although our current intent is to prepare a draft and final EA, there is a possibility that an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be required. The scoping process will satisfy the NEPA scoping requirements, irrespective of whether the Commission issues an EA or an EIS.

## **2.0 SCOPING**

This Scoping Document 1 (SD1) is intended to advise all participants as to the proposed scope of the EA 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 EA; (2) a description of the proposed action and alternatives; (3) a preliminary identification of environmental issues and proposed studies; (4) a request for comments and information; (5) a proposed EA outline; and (6) a preliminary list of comprehensive plans that are applicable to the project.

### **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;
- determine the resource issues, depth of analysis, and significance of issues to be addressed in the EA;

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<sup>4</sup>National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4370(f) (2012).

- 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 EA;
- 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, SCOPING MEETINGS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SITE REVIEW**

During preparation of the EA, 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 EA;
- in response to the Commission's notice that the project is ready for environmental analysis; and
- after issuance of the draft EA when we solicit written comments on the EA.

In addition to written comments solicited by this SD1, we will hold two public scoping meetings and an environmental site review in the vicinity of the project. An evening meeting will focus on receiving input from the public, and a daytime meeting will focus on concerns of the resource agencies, NGOs, and Indian tribes. We invite all interested agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and individuals to attend one or both of the meetings to assist us in identifying the scope of environmental issues that should be analyzed in the EA. All interested parties are also invited to participate in the environmental site review site visit. The times and locations of the meetings and environmental site review are as follows:

### **Evening Scoping Meeting**

Date and Time: Monday, July 7, 2014 at 6:00 p.m (EDT)

Location: Gilboa-Conesville Central School, 132 Wyckoff Road, Gilboa, New York

Phone Number: (607) 588-7541

### **Daytime Scoping Meeting**

Date and Time: Wednesday, July 9, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. (EDT)

Location: Best Western Inn, 121 Burgin Drive, Cobleskill, New York

Phone Number: (518) 234-4321

### **Environmental Site Review**

Date and Time: Tuesday, July 8, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. (EDT)

Location: Blenheim-Gilboa Visitors Center, 1378 State Route 30, North Blenheim, NY

Directions: The Visitors Center is located on State Route 30, 17 miles south of Middleburgh. Participants will meet in the Visitors Center parking lot; thereafter, NYPA will provide shuttles to visit locations within the project boundary.

Please notify Mr. Rob Daly at (914) 681-6564 or [rob.daly@nypa.gov](mailto:rob.daly@nypa.gov) on or before Monday, June 30, 2014, if you plan to attend the environmental site review. Persons not providing an RSVP by June 30, 2014, will not be allowed on the environmental site review. Also, persons attending the environmental site review must adhere to the following requirements: (1) persons must be 16 years or older; (2) persons must have a current, valid, government-issued or school photo identification (i.e., driver's license, etc.); (3) persons with open-toed shoes/sandals/flip flops/high heels, etc. will not be allowed on the environmental site review; (4) no photography will be allowed on-site; (5) small bags containing personal items for the site visit (i.e., notebooks, maps, water, etc.) will be allowed, but are subject to search; (6) no weapons are allowed on-site; (7) no alcohol/drugs are allowed on-site (or persons exhibiting the effects thereof); (8) all persons coming on-site are subject to search; and (9) no animals (except for service animals) are allowed on the environmental site review.

The scoping meetings will be recorded by a court reporter, and all statements (verbal 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 Blenheim-Gilboa Project. It is advised that participants review the PAD 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, P-2685, 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. A copy of the PAD is also available for inspection and reproduction at the following address: NYPA, 123 Main Street, White Plains, New York 10601.

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 EA.

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 EA will address recommendations and input received during the scoping process.

### 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 Blenheim-Gilboa Project would continue to operate as required by the current project license (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.

##### 3.1.1 Existing Project Facilities

The Blenheim-Gilboa Project is located on Schoharie Creek in the northern Catskill Mountains, approximately 40 miles southwest of Albany in the towns of Blenheim and Gilboa, New York. The drainage area for the project is approximately 356 square miles, including 40 square miles between the New York City-owned Gilboa dam and the project's lower dam. The project boundary encompasses 2,892 acres of land including an upper and lower reservoir, which have a total surface area of 812 acres. The downstream project boundary extends 1.2 miles north of the lower dam, along Schoharie Creek to State Route 30.

The Blenheim-Gilboa Project is a reversible pumped storage project that consists of an upper reservoir and dike, a lower reservoir and dam, conduits connecting the two reservoirs, an underground powerhouse, spillways, and related facilities (figure 2).

##### Upper Reservoir and Dike

The upper reservoir is situated on the top of Brown Mountain. Three sides of the upper reservoir are formed by a U-shaped, 2.25-mile-long earth and rock-fill embankment called the upper dike with a 30-foot-wide crest at an elevation of 2,008 feet.<sup>5</sup> The upper dike is a homogenous, glacial till, and rolled fill structure with a maximum height of 110 feet above existing ground and 162 feet above bedrock. At the full pool elevation of

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<sup>5</sup>All elevations are referenced to National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD) 1929.

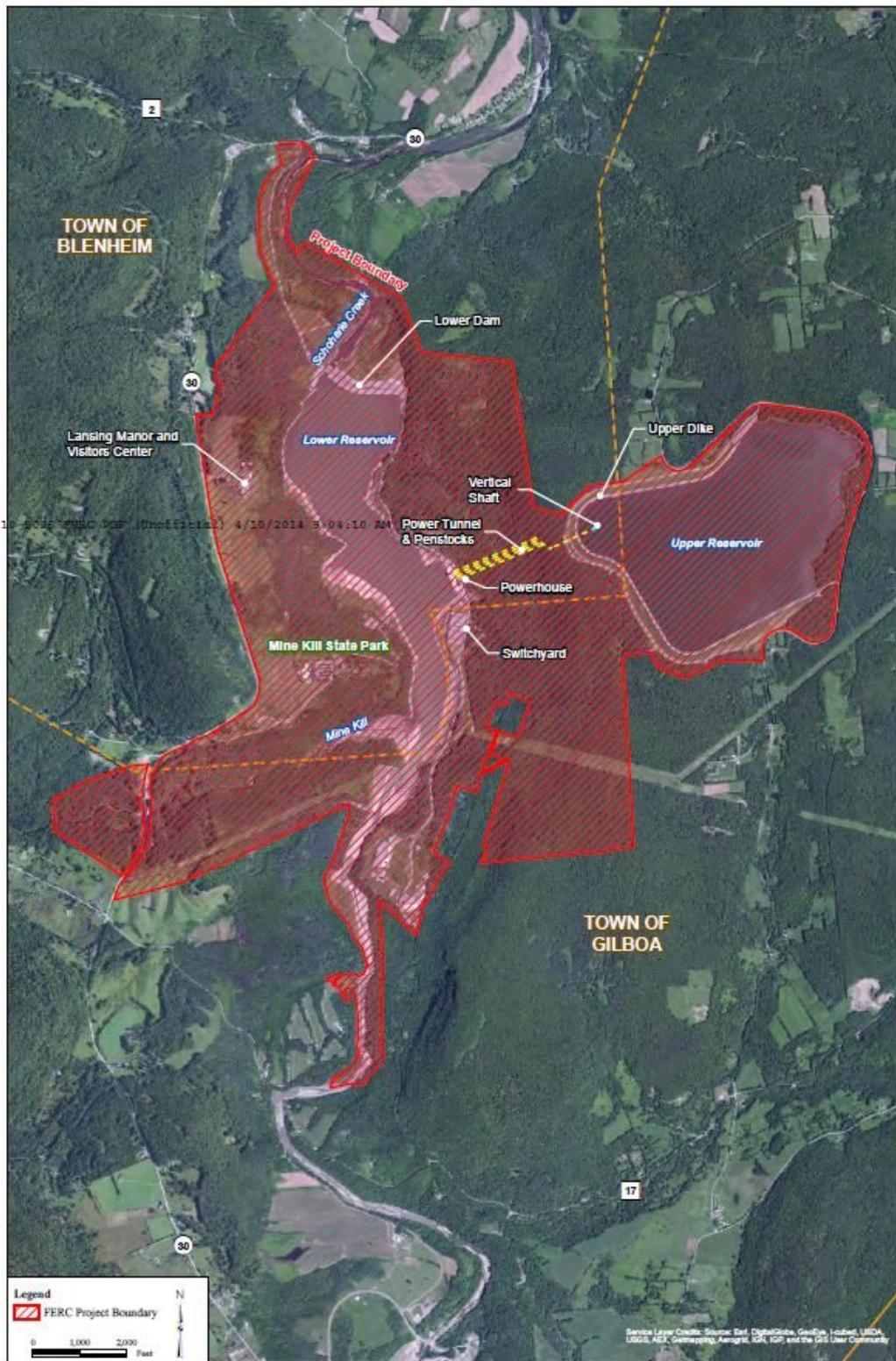


Figure 2. Project facilities for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project (Source: PAD).

2,003 feet, the upper reservoir has a water surface area of 399 acres and a total storage capacity of 18,791 acre-feet. The average depth at the full pool elevation is 47.5 feet. The upstream slope of the upper dike is 3 feet horizontal to 1 foot vertical and the downstream slope is 2.5 feet horizontal to 1 foot vertical.

The upper reservoir has an emergency spillway located at the northeastern corner of the upper dike to pass flows in the unlikely event of over-pumping. The 655-foot-long spillway has a 25-foot-wide asphaltic concrete crest and is armored with riprap on the upstream and downstream slopes. The emergency spillway's crest elevation is 2,005 feet, which is 3 feet lower than the rest of the upper reservoir embankment.

### **Upper Reservoir Intake Structure and Penstocks**

The upper reservoir is connected to the powerhouse penstocks by a 28-foot-wide, 1,042-foot-long vertical shaft inside Brown Mountain, where it is joined at a right angle to a 906-foot-long horizontal power tunnel, leading to a 460-foot-long manifold. At the head of the vertical shaft is a concrete morning glory intake structure located in the northwestern corner of the reservoir. This bell-mouth intake structure is 50 feet in diameter at its top surface and feeds into a 45-foot-high conic section, which tapers from 38 feet at the end of the bell-mouth to 28 feet at the vertical shaft. The anti-vortex intake cover is a hexagonal-shaped, flat slab 125 feet across points and is supported 17 feet above the surface of the intake by six vertical concrete piers spaced radially about the intake. The manifold divides the flow into four 12-foot-diameter penstocks. The maximum length of each penstock is 1,960 feet, of which 1,760 feet is steel-lined. Each penstock delivers water to a pump-generating unit at the powerhouse.

### **Powerhouse and Switchyard**

The powerhouse, located at the toe of Brown Mountain, is a reinforced concrete-gravity structure founded on bedrock. The powerhouse is 526 feet long, 172 feet wide, and 132 feet high, and contains four vertical, reversible 290-MW Hitachi Francis-type pump-turbines that provide a total capacity of 1,160 megawatts.<sup>6</sup> The pump-turbines each have seven 20-foot-diameter blades that operate at 257 revolutions per minute. The units have a reported maximum discharge of 12,800 cubic feet per second (cfs) during

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<sup>6</sup> As part of a refurbishment program conducted between 2006 and 2010, NYPA took one of the project's four turbine-generator units out of service each fall for approximately 8 months. Each of the units' mechanical and electrical components was replaced, along with repairs to most other parts.

generation and 10,200 cfs during pumping. More than three-quarters of the powerhouse is underground.

A switchyard on the eastern bank of Schoharie Creek south of the powerhouse connects the generating units to the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO)-controlled transmission network through three, 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines.<sup>7</sup> The Blenheim-Gilboa Project has an authorized nameplate generating capacity of 1,160 MW and generated an average of 619,467 MWh annually for the 11-year period of 2002 to 2012.

### **Lower Reservoir and Dam**

The lower reservoir was formed by damming Schoharie Creek and has a crest elevation of 911 feet. The lower dam impounds the waters of Schoharie Creek creating the 3-mile-long lower reservoir, which has a surface area of 413 acres, and a total storage capacity of 16,167 acre-feet. The average depth of the lower reservoir is 39.6 feet. The lower reservoir is formed by a 1,800-foot-long, central-core rock-fill dam. The embankment has a maximum height of 100 feet and an average height of 80 feet; the top width is 30 feet. The embankment has a 2 feet horizontal to 1 foot vertical slope on the upstream and downstream faces except for the portion above elevation 892 feet, which is a 1.5 feet horizontal to 1 foot vertical slope.

The lower reservoir has a spillway and a low-level outlet. The 425-foot-long, 134-foot-wide concrete-lined, side-chute lower reservoir spillway has a design crest elevation of 855 feet and is electrically controlled by three, 38-foot-wide, 45.5-foot-tall Taintor gates. The low-level outlet, with an invert elevation of 813.0 feet, is located in the east spillway abutment at the lower dam and the intake. The outlet has four low-level discharge valves of 4, 6, 8, and 10 inches for releasing 5 to 25 cfs. There are also two hydraulically operated, 36-inch-diameter, Howell-Bunger valves that can discharge a combined flow of 25 to 700 cfs.

#### **3.1.2 Existing Project Operations**

Project operation is based on the energy needs of the region and New York State. In general, project operations are determined by the demand for electricity. The NYISO, governed by FERC, coordinates between energy producer bids and utility demands to

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<sup>7</sup> On June 3, 2010, the Commission issued an order amending license removing three, 345-kV transmission lines (i.e., the Fraser-Gilboa, Gilboa-Scotland, and Gilboa-Leeds lines) from the Blenheim-Gilboa Project license.

secure reliable, low-cost energy throughout New York. When needed, the project can provide black start capability to restart other power authority facilities, and eventually, the statewide energy grid. Within several minutes the project can generate power when other facilities within the NYISO are shut down. The project also provides the ancillary services of regulation reserve and voltage support to the power system.

The upper reservoir stores potential energy and allows the project to generate up to 1,160 MW of electricity within minutes. The pump-turbines may be turned on or off several times throughout the day; however, the four units in the powerhouse typically generate during the day when consumer demand is high and other power resources are more expensive. Pumping usually occurs at night and on weekends when there is excess electricity in the system available for use.

In the upper reservoir, the total storage capacity of 18,791 acre-feet is composed of 15,085 acre-feet of usable storage between operating levels of 1,955 feet and 2,003 feet and dead storage of 3,706 acre-feet below elevation 1,955 feet. The lower reservoir operates at maximum and minimum levels of 900 feet and 860 feet, respectively. The lower reservoir has a total storage capacity of 16,167 acre-feet, which is composed of 12,422 acre-feet of usable storage between the two operating levels and 3,745 acre-feet of dead storage below elevation 860 feet.

## **3.2 APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL**

The proposed action is to continue to operate and maintain the Blenheim-Gilboa Project on Schoharie Creek, and implement certain environmental protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) measures. NYPA proposes no new developments or changes in project operation at this point in the licensing process. The current license for the project expires on April 30, 2019.

### **3.2.1 Proposed Project Facilities and Operations**

NYPA proposes no new or upgraded facilities, structural changes, or operational changes to the Blenheim-Gilboa Project during the term of the new license at this time.

### **3.2.2 Proposed Environmental Measures**

In its PAD, NYPA states that the existing license articles govern how the Blenheim-Gilboa Project is designed and operated, although NYPA does not specifically identify any existing measures or state whether it proposes to continue operating the Blenheim-Gilboa Project with the environmental protection, mitigation, and enhancement

(PM&E) measures described below. NYPA proposes no new PM&E measures for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project. The potential need for PM&E measures will be evaluated during the relicensing process.

NYPA's existing PM&E measures are as follows:

### **Geologic and Soil Resources**

- NYPA is required by the existing license to prevent soil erosion, stream siltation or pollution resulting from construction, operation, or maintenance of the project, through implementation of its Flood Erosion Control Plan.

### **Aquatic Resources**

- NYPA voluntarily releases a minimum flow of 7 cfs from the lower reservoir for the enhancement of fisheries habitat in Schoharie Creek.
- NYPA presently supports a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (New York DEC) fish stocking program, and New York DEC's active management of the upper and lower reservoirs.

### **Terrestrial Resources**

There are no existing PM&E measures related to terrestrial resources for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project.

### **Threatened and Endangered Species**

There are no existing PM&E measures related to threatened and endangered species for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project.

### **Recreation, Land Use, and Aesthetics**

- NYPA maintains recreation access to the upper and lower reservoirs, and downstream of the project, including parking lots, boat launches, and access points. Fishing and boating are permitted in each of these areas, and the lower reservoir also allows waterskiing, windsurfing, and tubing. Mine Kill State Park also offers trails, a scenic overview, basketball and tennis courts, a soccer field, a swimming pool, and a playground.

- NYPA maintains a boating access permitting program and an archery hunting program on project lands.
- NYPA maintains the Blenheim-Gilboa Visitors Center and Lansing Manor Complex, including overlooks, picnic areas, and parking lots.
- NYPA maintains the Blenheim-Gilboa Wildlife Management Area (WMA), including 2 acres of wetlands in the WMA in front of the Blenheim-Gilboa Visitors Center.

### **Cultural Resources**

There are no existing PM&E measures related to cultural resources for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project.

### **3.3 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.

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

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

#### **3.4.1 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>8</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 the project.

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<sup>8</sup> 16 U.S.C. §§ 791(a)-825(r).

### **3.4.2 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 the project. No party has sought a non-power license, and we have no basis for concluding that the Blenheim-Gilboa Project should no longer be used to produce power. Thus, we do not consider a non-power license a reasonable alternative to relicensing the project.

### **3.4.3 Project Decommissioning**

Decommissioning of the project 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 project 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 our review of the PAD and preliminary staff analysis, we have not identified any resources that could be cumulatively affected by the proposed continued operation and maintenance of the Blenheim-Gilboa Project.

## **4.2 RESOURCE ISSUES**

In this section, we present a preliminary list of environmental issues to be addressed in the EA. We identified these issues, which are listed by resource area, by reviewing the PAD and the Commission's record for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project. This list is not intended to be exhaustive or final, but contains those issues raised to date that could have substantial effects. After the scoping process is complete, we will review the list and determine the appropriate level of analysis needed to address each issue in the EA. Those issues identified by an asterisk (\*) will be analyzed for both cumulative and site-specific effects.

### **4.2.1 Geologic and Soils Resources**

- Effects of project operation and project-related recreation on shoreline erosion within the upper and lower reservoirs.

### **4.2.2 Aquatic Resources**

- Effects of project facilities and operation on water quality, particularly water temperature and dissolved oxygen, in project reservoirs.
- Effects of fish entrainment and mortality associated with pump-storage operation on fish populations in project reservoirs.
- The adequacy of existing minimum flow releases for supporting aquatic resources downstream of the project.

### **4.2.3 Terrestrial Resources**

- Effects of project operation, maintenance, and project-related recreation on botanical resources and wildlife, including game species.
- Effects of project reservoir fluctuations on riparian and wetland habitat and associated wildlife.

- Effects of project operation, maintenance, and project-related recreation on New York State listed wildlife species, including timber rattlesnake and bald eagle.

#### **4.2.4 Threatened and Endangered Species**

- Effects of project operation, maintenance, and project-related recreation on federally listed threatened and endangered species identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

#### **4.2.5 Recreation, Land Use, and Aesthetics**

- The adequacy of public access and recreation facilities to meet current and future recreation demand.
- Effects of project operation and maintenance on recreational opportunities and river access within the project area.
- Effects of project operation and maintenance on land use and aesthetic resources within the project area.

#### **4.2.6 Cultural Resources**

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on historic properties that are included in, eligible for listing in, or potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Effects of project operation and maintenance on any previously unidentified historic or archeological resources or traditional cultural properties that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historical Places.

#### **4.2.7 Developmental Resources**

- Effects of any proposed or recommended PM&E measures on the Blenheim-Gilboa Project economics.

## 5.0 PROPOSED STUDIES

Depending upon the findings of studies completed by NYPA and the recommendations of the consulted entities, NYPA will consider, and may propose certain other measures to enhance environmental resources affected by the project as part of the proposed action. NYPA's initial study proposals are identified by resource area in table 2. Detailed information on NYPA's initial study proposals can be found in the PAD. Further studies may need to be added to this list based on comments provided to the Commission and NYPA from interested participants, including Indian tribes.

Table 2. NYPA's Initial Study Proposals (Source: PAD).

<b>Resource Area and Study Name</b>	<b>Proposed Study/Information Need</b>
<b>Aquatic Resources</b>	
Literature-based Assessment of Fish Entrainment and Turbine Passage Survival	NYPA proposes to conduct a desktop study to assess the potential effects of passage through the pump-turbines on fish communities at the project.
<b>Recreation</b>	
Recreational Use/User Contact Study and Assessment of Effect of Project on Recreation Use	NYPA proposes a recreational use and need study to determine the amount of recreation use at the project; interview the recreating public to determine user opinions and goals with regard to the recreation sites; and determine if the operation of the project has an effect on the recreation facilities associated with the project.
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	
Phase 1A Archaeological Survey and Historic Structures Survey	NYPA proposes a Phase 1A investigation to identify historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and to identify and assess any potential adverse effects to historic properties from the continuing operation and maintenance of the project.

## 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 Blenheim-Gilboa Project. 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 the Blenheim-Gilboa Project;
- 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 EA/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 **August 8, 2014**. The Commission strongly encourages electronic filing. Please file all documents using the Commission's eFiling system at <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), (866) 208-3676 (toll free), or (202) 502-8659 (TTY). In lieu of electronic filing, please send a paper copy to: Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20426. The first page of any filing should include docket number P-2685-026.

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 visit, or how to file written comments with the Commission should be directed to Andy Bernick at (202) 502-8660 or [andrew.bernick@ferc.gov](mailto:andrew.bernick@ferc.gov). Additional information about the Commission's licensing process and the Blenheim-Gilboa Project may be obtained from the Commission's website, <http://www.ferc.gov> or NYPA's licensing website, <http://www.bg.nypa.gov/pages/home.aspx>.

## 7.0 EA PREPARATION

At this time, we anticipate the need to prepare a draft and final EA. The draft EA will be sent to all persons and entities on the Commission's service and mailing lists for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project. The EA 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 30 days to review the EA and file written comments with the Commission. All comments on the draft EA filed with the

Commission will be considered in preparation of the final EA. A schedule for the EA preparation will be provided after a license application is filed.

The major milestones, with pre-filing target dates, are as follows:

<u>Major Milestone</u>	<u>Target Date</u>
Scoping Meetings	July 2014
License Application Filed	April 2017
Ready for Environmental Analysis Notice Issued	
Deadline for Filing Comments, Recommendations, and Agency Terms and Conditions/Prescriptions	
Draft EA Issued	
Comments on Draft EA Due	
Deadline for Filing Modified Agency Recommendations	
Final EA Issued	

A copy of the pre-filing portion of NYPA's process plan, which has a complete list of milestones for developing the license application for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project, is attached as appendix B to this SD1.

## **8.0 PROPOSED EA OUTLINE**

The preliminary outline for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project EA 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 preliminarily identified and reviewed the plans listed below that may be relevant to the Blenheim-Gilboa Project. 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 Blenheim-Gilboa Project.

National Park Service. The Nationwide Rivers Inventory. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 1993.

New York Department of Environmental Conservation. 1979. Hudson River Basin water and related land resources: Level B study report and environmental impact statement. Albany, New York. September 1979.

New York Department of Environmental Conservation. 1985. New York State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River System Act. Albany, New York. March 1985.

New York Department of Environmental Conservation. 1986. Regulation for administration and management of the wild, scenic, and recreational rivers system in New York State excepting the Adirondack Park. Albany, New York. March 26, 1986.

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. New York Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): 2003-2007. Albany, New York. January 2003.

State of New York Hudson River Regulating District. 1923. General plan for the regulation of the flow of the Hudson River and certain of its tributaries. Albany, New York. June 7, 1923.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Canadian Wildlife Service. 1986. North American waterfowl management plan. Department of the Interior. Environment Canada. May 1986.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. n.d. Fisheries USA: the recreational fisheries policy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Washington, D.C.

## 10.0 MAILING LIST

The list below is the Commission's official mailing list for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project (FERC No. 2685). If you want to receive future mailings for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project and are not included in the official mailing 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: Blenheim-Gilboa Project No. 2685-026. You may use the same method if requesting removal from or a correction to your entry on the official mailing list below.

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.

### Official Mailing List for the Blenheim-Gilboa Project

Diane Rusanowsky Fishery Biologist NOAA/NMFS/HCD 212 Rogers Avenue Milford, CONNECTICUT 06460	Geologist Cultural Education Center Geological Survey Albany, NEW YORK 12230-0001
Regional Engineer Federal Energy Regulatory Commission New York Regional Office 19 W 34th St Rm 400 New York, NEW YORK 10001-3006	State of New York Marine Sciences Research Center State University of New York Stony Brook, NEW YORK 11794-0001
Director New York Department of Transportation Region 4 1530 Jefferson Rd Rochester, NEW YORK 14623-3110	CHARLES I LIPSKY, PE V. PRESIDENT New York Power Authority 123 Main St White Plains, NEW YORK 10601-3104

<p>Mark Slade Licensing Manager New York Power Authority 123 Main St White Plains, NEW YORK 10601</p>	<p>State of New York Director New York Public Service Commission 3 Empire State Plz Albany, NEW YORK 12223-1000</p>
<p>Janet Hand Deixler Secretary New York Public Service Commission 3 Empire State Plz Albany, NEW YORK 12223-1000</p>	<p>Lawrence J Frame New York State Canal Corporation PO Box 189 Albany, NEW YORK 12201-0189</p>
<p>Commissioner New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Office of the Commissioner 625 Broadway, 14th Floor Albany, NEW YORK 12233-0001</p>	<p>Commissioner New York State Energy Research &amp; Dev. Authority 17 Columbia Circle Albany, NEW YORK 12203-6399</p>
<p>Regulatory Branch U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo District 1776 Niagara St Buffalo, NEW YORK 14207-3111</p>	<p>Kevin Bruce U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District CENAN-OP-RU, Upstate Regulatory Field Office 1 Buffington St, Bld. 10, 3rd Flr North Watervliet, NEW YORK 12189-4000</p>
<p>Commanding Officer U.S. Coast Guard MSO Buffalo 1 Fuhrmann Blvd Buffalo, NEW YORK 14203-3105</p>	<p>Commanding Officer U.S. Coast Guard MSO Long Island Sound 120 Woodward Ave New Haven, CONNECTICUT 06512-3628</p>

<p>U.S. Department of Transportation 50 Wolf Rd.,6th fl. Albany, NEW YORK 12232</p>	<p>David Stilwell U.S. Fish &amp; Wildlife Service NY Region 5 Field Office 3817 Luker Rd Cortland, NEW YORK 13045-9385</p>
<p>Charles Schumer U.S. Senate 322 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 20510</p>	<p>Kirsten Gillibrand Senator U.S. Senate 478 Russell Senate Office Bldg Washington, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 20510</p>

**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**  
**BLLENHEIM-GILBOA PROJECT PROCESS PLAN AND SCHEDULE**

This process plan establishes the deadlines for the pre-filing process. If the due date falls on a weekend or holiday, the due date is the following business day. Early filings or issuances will not result in changes to these deadlines. Shaded milestones are unnecessary if there are no study disputes.

<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Pre-Filing Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>FERC Regulation</b>
NYPA	Issue Public Notice for NOI/PAD	4/10/2014	5.3(d)(2)
NYPA	File NOI/PAD with FERC	4/10/2014	5.5, 5.6
FERC	Tribal Meetings	5/10/2014	5.7
FERC	Issue Notice of Commencement of Proceeding; Issue Scoping Document 1	6/9/2014	5.8
FERC	Blenheim-Gilboa Project Environmental Site Review and Scoping Meetings	7/7-9/2014	5.8(b)(viii)
All stakeholders	PAD/SD1 Comments and Study Requests Due	8/8/2014	5.9
FERC	Issue Scoping Document 2 (if needed)	9/22/2014	5.1
NYPA	File Proposed Study Plan (PSP)	9/22/2014	5.11(a)
All stakeholders	Proposed Study Plan Meeting	10/22/2014*	5.11(e)
All stakeholders	Proposed Study Plan Comments Due	12/21/2014	5.12
NYPA	File Revised Study Plan	1/20/2015	5.13(a)
All stakeholders	Revised Study Plan Comments Due	2/4/2015	5.13(b)
FERC	Director's Study Plan Determination	2/19/2015	5.13(c)
FWS, New York DEC	Any Study Disputes Due	3/11/2015	5.14(a)
Dispute Panel	Third Dispute Panel Member Selected	3/26/2015	5.14(d)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Convenes	3/31/2015	5.14(d)(3)

<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Pre-Filing Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>FERC Regulation</b>
NYPA	Applicant Comments on Study Disputes Due	4/5/2015	5.14(j)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Technical Conference	4/10/2015	5.14(j)
Dispute Panel	Dispute Resolution Panel Findings Issued	4/30/2015	5.14(k)
FERC	Director's Study Dispute Determination	5/20/2015	5.14(l)
NYPA	First Study Season	Spring/Summer 2015	5.15(a)
NYPA	Initial Study Report	2/19/2016	5.15(c)(1)
All stakeholders	Initial Study Report Meeting	3/5/2016	5.15(c)(2)
NYPA	Initial Study Report Meeting Summary	3/20/2016	5.15(c)(3)
All stakeholders	Any Disputes/Requests to Amend Study Plan Due	4/19/2016	5.15(c)(4)
All stakeholders	Responses to Disputes/Amendment Requests Due	5/19/2016	5.15(c)(5)
FERC	Director's Determination on Disputes/Amendments	6/18/2016	5.15(c)(6)
NYPA	Second Study Season	Spring/Summer 2016	5.15(a)
NYPA	Updated Study Report due	2/18/2017	5.15(f)
All stakeholders	Updated Study Report Meeting	3/5/2017	5.15(f)
NYPA	Updated Study Report Meeting Summary	3/20/2017	5.15(f)
All stakeholders	Any Disputes/Requests to Amend Study Plan Due	4/19/2017	5.15(f)
All stakeholders	Responses to Disputes/Amendment Requests Due	5/19/2017	5.15(f)
FERC	Director's Determination on Disputes/Amendments	6/18/2017	5.15(f)
NYPA	File Preliminary Licensing Proposal	12/1/2016	5.16(a)

<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Pre-Filing Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>FERC Regulation</b>
All stakeholders	Preliminary Licensing Proposal Comments Due	3/1/2017	5.16(e)
NYPA	File Final License Application	4/30/2017	5.17
NYPA	Issue Public Notice of License Application Filing	5/14/2017	5.17(d)(2)

\* Although the study plan meeting may be held up to 30 days after the filing of its proposed study plan, NYPA requested that the meeting be held prior to 10/22/2014 due to a scheduling conflict on that date.

Document Content(s)

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