

Anne Mattice Strauch, North Blenheim, NY.

Comments to NYPA Initial Study Report (ISR) Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Project (FERC Project Number: 2685-026)

The following comments may pertain to the Effect of Project Operations on Downstream Flooding Study and also the Historic Structures Survey:

I believe the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the Historic Structures Survey and Phase 1A Archaeological Survey/Study is significantly too limited. I can illustrate this with an example. During the flooding event caused by Tropical Storm Lee/Hurricane Irene in August of 2011, the BG facility experienced technical difficulties while attempting to open the gates on the lower reservoir. By the time they were able to get the gates operational, the water level was approaching a level at which the overflow of the earthen dam was a concern, so instead of raising the gates slowly, the gates were raised more rapidly than what is ideal. This caused a wall of water to be released into the Schoharie Creek by the BG Facility. There are several eye witness accounts of this "wall of water" rushing down through the valley.

In January of 2012 the NYPA BG Facility hosted a community meeting in Schoharie to inform the public of their role during the Irene flooding event. In this presentation, made by Lyn Haight, who was head of the BG Facility at the time, the timeline of events was presented regarding the technical difficulties with the gates and all discharges that were released during the day. Between pictures taken of the Old Covered Bridge right before it was destroyed, and the information presented by the NYPA itself, it is clear that the "wall of water" released by the NYPA is what caused the Blenheim Covered Bridge National Historic Landmark to be lifted from its abutments and smashed into the Department of Transportation Route 30 Bridge, thus destroying this historic structure. The timing of the gates being raised correlates perfectly with the pictures and eye witness accounts of the bridge being destroyed. My point in all this is, in this case, there is a CLEAR instance where the BG Facility's APE went beyond the land they occupy and effected the historic structure down stream. I believe the entire Schoharie Valley should be included in the APE, from Blenheim to Esperance.

The following comments pertain to the Study: Socio-Economics and the Effect of the Tax-Exempt Status of the Facility on the local and neighboring communities:

The use of the data from the Schoharie County Real Property Tax Office is a highly inaccurate method of obtaining an actual tax value for the Blenheim-Gilboa facility. This number is completely fictitious, a value that was arbitrarily fabricated by our Town Assessor. Since the BG Facility is tax exempt, neither the Town nor County has had reason to invest the money to obtain an accurate appraisal of the facility. I believe an appraisal, independent of the NYPA, needs to be

commissioned. The cost of this could be significant and it would be our preference that the County be allowed to pick the appraiser, with the cost born by the NYPA.

The studies and REMI have a baseline of present time, looking forward into the future. I believe a study showing the effects of the BG Facility over the last 40+ years should also be done. It is preposterous to believe it is possible to ascertain an actual economic impact comparing the present economic state of Blenheim to what that economic state will be in 40 years. Taking into account the tax exempt status of the BG Facility and the amount of land and tax revenue it has taken from the Town, a study of Blenheim over the past 50 years would, I think, reveal that the town would have been better off if the facility had never been built. The contributions the facility has made to the community, I do not believe, have made up for the massive land and tax loss the Town of Blenheim sustained.

I would also like to say that I agree with all comments submitted by the Schoharie County Relicensing Committee, which were submitted on behalf of Schoharie County, The Blenheim Long Term Community Recovery Committee, Dam Concerned Citizens and The Town of Blenheim Relicensing Committee.

I submit these comments on behalf of the Town of Blenheim, as a Blenheim Town Council Member.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne Mattice-Strauch
Blenheim Town Council Member

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