

# Aboriginal Group Communication Plan

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*Site C Clean Energy Project*

*Revision 2: June 24, 2015*

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## 1.0 Background

### 1.1 The Site C Clean Energy Project

The Site C Clean Energy Project (the Project) will be the third dam and generating station on the Peace River in northeast B.C. The Project will provide 1,100 megawatts of capacity and about 5,100 gigawatt hours of energy each year to the province's integrated electricity system. The Project will be a source of clean, reliable and cost-effective electricity for BC Hydro's customers for more than 100 years.

The key components of the Project are:

- an earthfill dam, approximately 1,050 metres long and 60 metres high above the riverbed;
- an 83 kilometre long reservoir that will be, on average, two to three times the width of the current river;
- a generating station with six 183 MW generating units;
- two new 500 kilovolt AC transmission lines that will connect the Project facilities to the Peace Canyon Substation, along an existing right-of-way;
- realignment of six segments of Highway 29 over a total distance of approximately 30 kilometers; and
- construction of a berm at Hudson's Hope.

The Project will also include the construction of temporary access roads, a temporary bridge across the Peace River, and worker accommodation at the dam site.

### 1.2 Project Benefits

The Project will provide important benefits to British Columbia and Canada. It will serve the public interest by delivering long term, reliable electricity to meet growing demand; contribute to employment, economic development, ratepayer, taxpayer and community benefits; meet the need for electricity with lower GHG impact than other resource options; contribute to sustainability by optimizing the use of existing hydroelectric facilities, delivering approximately 35 per cent of the energy produced at the W.A.C. Bennett Dam, with only five per cent of the reservoir area; and include an honourable process of engagement with First Nations and the potential for accommodation of their interests.

### 1.3 Environmental Assessment Process

The environmental assessment of the Project has been carried out in accordance with the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA 2012), the *BC Environmental Assessment Act* (BCEAA), and the *Federal-Provincial Agreement to Conduct a Cooperative Environmental Assessment, Including the Establishment of a Joint Review Panel of the Site C Clean Energy Project*. The assessment considered the environmental, economic, social, heritage and health effects and benefits of the Project, and included the engagement of Aboriginal groups, the public, all levels of government, and other stakeholders in the assessment process.

Detailed findings of the environmental assessment are documented in the Site C Clean Energy Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which was completed in accordance with the Environmental Impact Statement Guidelines (EIS Guidelines) issued by the Minister of Environment of Canada and the Executive Director of the Environmental Assessment Office of British Columbia. The EIS was submitted to regulatory agencies in January 2013, and amended in August 2013 following a 60 day public comment period on the assessment, including open house sessions in Fort St. John, Hudson's Hope, Dawson Creek, Chetwynd, town of Peace River (Alberta) and Prince George.

In August 2013, an independent Joint Review Panel (JRP) commenced its evaluation of the EIS, and in December 2013 and January 2014 undertook five weeks of public hearings on the Project in 11 communities in the Peace region, including six Aboriginal communities. In May 2014, the JRP provided the provincial and federal governments with a report summarizing the Panel's rationale, conclusions and recommendations relating to the environmental assessment of the Project. On completion of the JRP stage of the environmental assessment, the CEA Agency and BCEAO consulted with Aboriginal groups on the JRP report, and finalized key documents of the environmental assessment for inclusion in a Referral Package for the Provincial Ministers of Environment and Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

Construction of the Project is also subject to regulatory permits and authorizations, and other approvals. In addition, the Crown has a duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Aboriginal groups.

## **1.4 Environmental Assessment Findings**

The environmental assessment of the Project focused on 22 valued components (VCs), or aspects of the biophysical and human setting that are considered important by Aboriginal groups, the public, the scientific community, and government agencies. In the EIS, valued components were categorized under five pillars: environmental, economic, social, heritage and health. For each VC, the assessment of the potential effects of the Project components and activities during construction and operations was based on a comparison of the biophysical and human environments between the predicted future conditions with the Project, and the predicted future conditions without the Project.

Potential adverse effects on each VC are described in the EIS along with technically and economically feasible mitigation measures, their potential effectiveness, as well as specific follow-up and related commitments for implementation. If a residual effect was found on a VC, the effect was evaluated for significance. Residual effects were categorized using criteria related to direction, magnitude, geographic extent, context, level of confidence and probability, in accordance with the EIS Guidelines.

The assessment found that the effects of the Project will largely be mitigated through careful, comprehensive mitigation programs and ongoing monitoring during construction and operations. The EIS indicates that the Project is unlikely to result in a significant adverse effect for most of the valued components. However, a determination of a significant effect of the Project was found on four VCs: Fish and Fish Habitat, Wildlife Resources, Vegetation and Ecological Communities, and Current Use of Lands and Resources for Traditional Purposes.

## 1.5 Environmental Assessment Conclusion

On October 14, 2014, the Provincial Ministers of Environment and of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operation decided that the Project is in the public interest and that the benefits provided by the Project outweigh the risks of significant adverse environmental, social and heritage effects (<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/10/site-c-project-granted-environmental-assessment-approval.html>). The Ministers have issued an Environmental Assessment Certificate (EAC) setting conditions under which the Project can proceed.

Further, on November 25, 2014, The Minister of Environment of Canada issued a Decision Statement confirming that, while the Project has the potential to result in some significant adverse effects, the Federal Cabinet has concluded that those effects are justified in the circumstances. The Decision Statement sets out the conditions under which the Project can proceed.

## 1.6 Development of Mitigation, Management and Monitoring Plans

Mitigation, management and monitoring plans for the Project have been developed taking into account the measures proposed in the EIS, information received during the Joint Review Panel hearing process, and the Report of the Joint Review Panel on the Project. Those plans are consistent with, and meet requirements set out in, the conditions of the Environmental Assessment Certificate and of the Decision Statement issued on October 14, 2014 and November 25, 2014 respectively.

In addition, in accordance with environmental best practices (Condition 3.1), these plans were informed by the best available information and knowledge, based on validated methods and models, undertaken by qualified individuals and apply the best available economically and technologically feasible mitigation strategies. These plans contain provisions for review and update as new information on the effects of the Project and on the efficacy of the mitigation measures become available.

## 2.0 Aboriginal Group Communication Plan

### 2.1 Objective and Scope

The objective of the Aboriginal Group Communication Plan (the “Plan”) is to establish a communications program for informing Aboriginal harvesters about construction activities related to the Site C Project (the “Project”) that may affect their harvesting opportunities for plants, fish and game, as well as access to those opportunities. This Plan is aligned with the Construction Communication Plan.

This Plan has been developed in accordance with the following Conditions 27 and 72 of the Environmental Assessment Certificate (EAC) and Condition 14.2 of the federal Decision Statement (FDS), as indicated in the table below.

EAC 27, 72 and FDS 14.2

Condition Number	Condition	Plan Reference
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Condition Number	Condition	Plan Reference
EAC Condition 27	In order to manage adverse effects on Aboriginal plant, fish and game harvesters during both the construction and operations phases of the Project, the EAC Holder must develop, as part of the Construction Communication Plan, a communications program (Program) for informing Aboriginal harvesters about construction activities that may affect their harvesting opportunities for plants, fish, and game, as well as access to those opportunities.	
	The Program must also include information regarding how fish monitoring programs will be used to inform Aboriginal harvesters about changes in fish community composition during operations.	Section 5.0 Key Activities and Tools
	The EAC Holder must make all reasonable efforts to develop the draft Program in collaboration with FLNR and Aboriginal Groups, at least 90 days prior to Project activities that may affect Aboriginal harvesting opportunities.	
	The EAC Holder must file the final Program with EAO, FLNR and Aboriginal Groups at least 30 days prior to any activities that may affect Aboriginal harvesting opportunities.	
	The EAC Holder must develop, implement and adhere to the final Program, and any amendments, to the satisfaction of EAO.	
EAC Condition 72	<p>The EAC Holder must manage effective communications for the Project by implementing measures in communication plans and a business participation plan.</p> <p>The following communication and participation plans are to be developed and implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Participation Plan;</li> <li>• Construction Communication Plan; and</li> <li>• <b>First Nations Communication Plan.</b></li> </ul>	
	Each plan in addition to plan specific conditions identified in this document will include:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear Statement of Objectives;</li> </ul>	Section 3.0 Scope of Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audiences;</li> </ul>	Section 4.0 Audiences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key activities and tools; and</li> </ul>	Section 5.0 Key Activities and Tools

Condition Number	Condition	Plan Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual summary reporting.</li> </ul>	Section 6.0 Plan Reporting Requirements
FDS Condition 14.2	The Proponent shall inform Reservoir Area Aboriginal groups and Immediate Downstream Aboriginal groups about Designated Project activities that may affect the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes including harvesting of plants, fish and wildlife and access to land for the purposes of those uses.	

## 2.2 Consultation

Many of the conditions require BC Hydro to consult or collaborate with certain government agencies and Aboriginal groups in respect of measures and plans required by the conditions.

BC Hydro began consultation on the Project in late 2007, before any decision to advance the Project to an environmental assessment. BC Hydro’s consultation with the public, stakeholders, regional and local governments, regulatory agencies, and Aboriginal groups is described in EIS Section 9, Information Distribution and Consultation.

Additional information on the consultation process and a summary of issues and concerns raised during consultation are provided in:

- Volume 1 Appendix G, Public Information Distribution and Consulting Supporting Documentation
- Volume 1 Appendix H, Aboriginal Information Distribution and Consultation Supporting Documentation
- Volume 1 Appendix I, Government Agency Information Distribution and Consultation Supporting Documentation
- Volume 5, Appendix A01 to A29, Parts 2 and 2A, Aboriginal Consultation Summaries
- Technical Memo: Aboriginal Consultation

Draft versions of a number of the mitigation, management and monitoring plans required by the conditions were submitted to applicable government agencies and Aboriginal groups for comment on October 17, 2014.

Comments on these draft plans were received from various government agencies and Aboriginal groups during November and December 2014, and were considered in the revisions to these plans. BC Hydro’s consideration of these comments is provided in the consideration tracking tables that accompany each plan.

On December 15, 2014, Treaty 8 Tribal Association (T8TA), on behalf of West Moberly, Saulteau and Prophet River First Nations, submitted to BC Hydro a letter in response to BC Hydro’s request for comment on the Plans sent on October 17, 2014. The letter included several appendices, including the Joint Review Panel (JRP) Report and transcripts from the JRP hearings in December 2013 and January 2014. BC Hydro responded to the three First

Nations on January 21, 2015 noting that the October 17 2014 request for comments on the plans was to provide an opportunity to the First Nations to submit to BC Hydro any information they wanted to provide in relation to the Plans. BC Hydro advised that it was aware of the information referred to in T8TA's letter when the plans were prepared, and advised that it was preparing a table setting out where any mitigation measures identified by representatives of the three First Nations during the hearings are considered in the draft plans and would provide that to the First Nations once complete. Accordingly BC Hydro's responses to those mitigation measures identified by the representatives of the three First Nations during the JRP hearings were provided to the EAO in a separate table by letter dated May 19, 2015. Aside from the December 15, 2014 letter, BC Hydro has not received further comments from these First Nations. A letter of understanding dated April 30, 2015 respecting provision of capacity funding to support review of the plans was entered into by BC Hydro and Sauleteau First Nations (on behalf of Sauleteau, West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations).

New draft plans (i.e., Housing Plan and Housing Monitoring and Follow-Up Program, and the quarry/pit development plans) were provided to the entities identified in the EAC conditions on April 7, 2015. The Vegetation and Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Plan was revised based on comments received on the October 17, 2014 version and based on discussions with Environment Canada and the BC Ministry of Environment, and was re-submitted to applicable entities on April 7, 2015.

Comments on the revised plans were requested by May 11, 2015 to allow for review, consideration of comments and finalization of the plans 30 days prior to the commencement of construction.

Comments were received by this requested date from:

- Fort Nelson First Nation
- Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO), and
- Métis Nation British Columbia.

The Peace River Regional District submitted their comments on the plan on May 14, 2015. FLNRO submitted additional comments on May 15, 2015, including comments from the BC Ministry of Environment.

BC Hydro considered the comments provided and prepared final plans. On May 19, 2015, BC Hydro submitted the following mitigation, management and monitoring plans to the BC Environmental Assessment Office (BC EAO) for review:

- Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Construction Safety Management Plan
- Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan
- Vegetation and Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
- Vegetation Clearing and Debris Management Plan
- Aboriginal Plant Use Mitigation Plan
- Aboriginal Training and Inclusion Plan
- Business Participation Plan

- Emergency Services Plan
- Healthcare Services Plan
- Labour and Training Plan
- Cultural Resources Mitigation Plan
- Heritage Resources Management Plan
- Housing Plan and Housing Monitoring and Follow-Up Program
- Wuthrich Quarry Development Plan
- West Pine Quarry Development Plan; and
- Del Rio Pit Development Plan.

The CEA Agency and Environment Canada submitted comments on the revised plan on May 22, 2015. These comments were considered and the final plans were revised accordingly and submitted on June 5, 2015 to the entities identified in the EAC conditions.

### **3.0 Scope of Plan**

This Plan covers communications activities during construction of the Project and has been prepared in fulfillment of BC Hydro's mitigation commitments described in section 19 of the EIS:

- *Develop a communications program to inform harvesters of planned or unplanned events related to construction activities that may affect fishing opportunities or access.*
- *Develop a communications program to inform harvesters of planned or unplanned events related to construction activities that may affect hunting opportunities or access.*
- *Develop a communications program to inform harvesters of planned or unplanned events that may affect opportunities to harvest plants, berries, and other resources.*

BC Hydro understands that the Project Activity Zone, as defined in the EIS, overlaps with areas identified as important by Aboriginal groups, including:

- the Peace Moberly Tract;
- Areas adjacent to Saulteau and West Moberly First Nations communities; and,
- Areas used for fishing in the Moberly, Halfway and Peace Rivers.

### **4.0 Audiences**

The following Aboriginal groups have been identified as the audience for this Plan:

- Blueberry River First Nations
- Dene Tha' First Nation
- Doig River First Nation
- Duncan's First Nation
- Fort Nelson First Nation
- Halfway River First Nation
- Horse Lake First Nation

- Kelly Lake Métis Settlement Society
- McLeod Lake Indian Band
- Métis Nation British Columbia
- Prophet River First Nation
- Saulteau First Nations
- West Moberly First Nations

## 5.0 Key Activities and Tools

This Plan comprises the general activities and tools that will, at minimum, form part of the construction communications program. In addition to what is reflected in this plan and as part of the consultation process, BC Hydro and individual Aboriginal groups may develop communication tools that work best for the specific community.

The following communications activities, described in section 3 of the Construction Communication Plan, will also be used to communicate with Aboriginal groups about construction activities:

- Project website;
- Advertising;
- Construction Information Telephone Line;
- Construction Notices;
- Email updates;
- Mailings;
- Information Materials;
- Social Media;
- Signage;
- Community Consultation Offices;
- Open Houses; and,
- Community Liaison Committees.

In addition, BC Hydro will conduct the following activities to engage with Aboriginal groups to inform Aboriginal harvesters about construction activities that may affect their harvesting opportunities for plants, fish and game, as well as access to those opportunities:

- **Notification Letters of Construction Activities:** BC Hydro will provide updates and advance notice of planned construction activities on a quarterly basis. The first construction notification letter was distributed on July 8, 2015.
- **Communication Forum:** BC Hydro has created and invited Aboriginal groups to participate in a Communication Forum to discuss and share information regarding construction-related topics. The Forum held its first meeting on November 26, 2015 and will meet on a bi-annual basis.

- **Site C Information for Aboriginal Group SharePoint Site:** BC Hydro has established a central online repository for sharing information with Aboriginal groups. Information posted to this site includes Environmental Protection Plans, Monthly Environmental Monitoring Reports, materials from meetings for the Communication Forum and Culture and Heritage Resources Committee, construction notifications and other reports.
- **Culture and Heritage Resources Committee:** A Culture and Heritage Resources Committee has been established with Aboriginal groups to advise BC Hydro on the management of adverse Project effects on cultural resources. The Committee initially met on July 30, 2015 and meets as determined by the Committee members. The Committee provides opportunities for discussion and information exchange, as well as the development of mitigation measures related to cultural and heritage resources.
- **Aboriginal Harvesters Information Sheet:** an information sheet containing regular updates on construction activities.
- **Saulteau Trappers Protocol:** BC Hydro has developed, in collaboration with Saulteau First Nation Trapline holders, a protocol for notification of work taking place in their respective traplines related to the Project. This protocol was initiated in 2013 and will continue through the construction phase of the Project.
- **Consultation meetings:** BC Hydro will continue to consult Aboriginal groups through the construction phase of the Project. From time to time and as appropriate, consultation meetings can be used to provide updates to communities about construction activities that may affect their land users.
- **Fish Monitoring Program:** BC Hydro will communicate results of the Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat Monitoring and Follow-up Program which includes as part of the a Site C Reservoir Fish Community monitoring program to assess the effects of river to reservoir transformation on the fish community in the Site C Reservoir and associated tributaries . Aboriginal groups will be provided with monitoring reports annually. Community-based meetings with Aboriginal groups could be held to share these results and inform the communities on changes to the fish community composition.

## 6.0 Plan Reporting Requirements

On an annual basis, BC Hydro will provide to the Environmental Assessment Office and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency a summary report of its activities carried out under this Plan.