

2009 03 12 Proposed Slave River Hydro Project Update

The description of the proposed Slave River Hydro project by the proponent as "run of the river" is a misnomer. It has been acknowledged in order to generate the amount of power to make the project economically feasible - roughly at least 1350 MW - a valley-wide impoundment of the Slave River would be required. This would be a massive concrete dam and flooding upstream (south) as far as Fitzgerald, Alberta would take place. The first three major ledges, about 15 km of the Slave River Rapids, at Cassette, Pelican and Mountain would be submerged. The dam installation would likely be located just south of the 60th parallel in Alberta and the remaining Rapids of the Drowned ledge downriver (north) in the NWT adjacent to Fort Smith would likely remain, but would suffer downstream impact.

Additionally, the assumption the power would be used to generate heat to extract oil from the oilsands in the McMurray area is incorrect. The oilsands industry actually creates a net surplus of electricity from what they generate on site. The Slave River hydro proposal by ATCO and TransCanada (in partnership) involves gathering electricity from a number of different sources including the surpluses available from the oilsands as well as other smaller hydro developments (the Taltson River to the east of Fort Smith has great hydro potential); but the majority of the power would come from the Slave River Rapids installation. All that gathered power would be exported - shipped south to power-hungry markets on the American west coast. This would involve a major transmission line down the length of Alberta, through Idaho and Washington, terminating initially in Oregon and eventually extended to serve California. The vision, details and transmission route map of the electricity export plan - dubbed "Northern Lights" by TransCanada can be viewed on the TransCanada website at:

<http://www.transcanada.com/company/northernlights.html>

Both ATCO and TransCanada are successful and wealthy Alberta Corporations and have the full support of the Alberta government in this venture. The Alberta government is apparently hungry for new "green" sources of energy to show off to counter its growing poor international image of ignoring negative environmental impacts (including nasty effects on the health of its own citizens) while producing "dirty" oil from the oilsands. Slave Hydro Project proponent representatives are currently actively negotiating with local First Nations, particularly the Smith Landing First Nation based in Fitzgerald, Alberta which has treaty settlement rights to the land adjacent to the Slave River Rapids. Their cooperation is apparently preferred, and maybe even essential for the project to proceed.

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