

# RIVER NEWS

ST. LAWRENCE-FDR POWER

PROJECT RELICENSING UPDATE

FALL 2003

## U.S. ISSUES NEW LICENSE FOR ST. LAWRENCE PROJECT

Calling it “a hugely important occasion,” Gov. George E. Pataki announced on Oct. 22 that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) had approved a new 50-year license



*The St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project, which produced first power in July 1958, is one of the largest hydropower facilities to be relicensed by federal regulators.*

for the New York Power Authority to continue operating its first generating facility, the St. Lawrence-Franklin D. Roosevelt Power Project.

“I am tremendously pleased that FERC has taken this action, a move that will insure that this major public facility in the North Country will continue to be operated for the benefit of the people of New York by the public authority that built it and operated it so well for the past half century,” Governor Pataki said.

The new license, which took effect Nov. 1, culminates a cooperative effort that began more than seven years ago and involved scores of stakeholders—including state and federal regulators, North Country communities, environmental groups, businesses, labor unions and local residents—who negotiated a historic agreement, providing a host of benefits to the region (see related story, page 1).

“This marks an end and a beginning,” said Power Authority Chairman Louis P. Ciminelli. “It is the end of a long, difficult, but extremely productive relicensing process that was successful because of the hard work and cooperation of state and local officials, public and private agencies and members of the local communities and industries.”

Ciminelli and his fellow Power Authority trustees accepted the FERC license at their Nov. 25 meeting.

With a net dependable capability of 800,000 kilowatts, St. Lawrence-FDR, which began producing power in 1958, is one of the largest hydropower projects to be relicensed by FERC. Federal officials praised the relatively new collaborative approach NYPA used to resolve the many issues surrounding a facility of that size before its original license expired on Oct. 31. ♦

## NYPA POWER PROJECT PRODUCES A RANGE OF LOCAL BENEFITS

Besides protecting local jobs with some of the lowest-cost electricity in North America, NYPA’s St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project provides many other benefits to North Country communities. Federal approval this fall of a new 50-year license for the Massena-based facility clears the way for additional gains that will benefit local residents in a variety of ways.

These benefits are spelled out in the Power Authority’s new license (available online at [www.nypa.gov](http://www.nypa.gov)) as well as in settlement agreements reached between NYPA and relicensing stakeholders, including the Local Government Task Force, which repre-



*North Country residents can expect improved recreational facilities as a result of NYPA’s relicensing.*

sents municipalities and school districts in the North Country.

Some relicensing benefits began even before NYPA’s new license was issued; for example, Gov. George E. Pataki traveled to the North Country last year to present local officials with an initial \$4 million payment from a community enhancement fund established by NYPA (see *River News*, Fall 2002). This summer, the Power Authority hired a Syracuse engineering firm to start design work on renovations to local parks and beaches; in October, NYPA trustees directed a hydropower services consultant to begin a series of studies in preparation for environmental enhancements in and around the St. Lawrence River (see related story, page 2).

Federal approval for NYPA’s continued operation of the St. Lawrence-FDR project means that the pace of the implementation of North Country benefits will accelerate in the coming weeks and months. These benefits include:

**A \$115 million community enhancement fund** for 10 entities represented by the Local Government Task Force, composed of St. Lawrence County; the towns of Lisbon, Louisville, Massena and Waddington; the villages of Massena and Waddington; and the Lisbon, Massena and Madrid-Waddington school districts, with \$2 million to be provided each year for the life of the new project license.

**A funding mechanism likely to produce** another \$10.5 million over the next 50



years, known as the High Water Flow Adjustment, triggered whenever annual net generation at the power project exceeds 7 million megawatt-hours.

**Approximately \$19 million in recreational improvements** to be completed over the next five years, with more than \$11 million for Robert Moses and Coles Creek state parks and some \$8 million at local parks in Lisbon, Louisville, Massena and Waddington. In addition to renovations and expansions of existing facilities for swimming, boating, camping, hiking and picnicking, many of the projects will bring these sites into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Significantly revised project boundaries** following the return of approximately 600 acres of shoreline property to local communities and adjoining landowners. In addition to the conveyance of this acreage, 895 acres of surplus project land were previously conveyed to North Country communities, a process that began in early 2001.

**Shoreline stabilization projects to halt or prevent erosion** at 31 sites along the project shoreline, with work expected to be completed over a 10-year period, starting in 2004. ♦

# ENHANCEMENTS TO IMPROVE RIVER'S ENVIRONMENT

Because the St. Lawrence River is such an important natural resource to the people—and wildlife—of the North Country, NYPA's new license for its St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project provides for a wide-ranging series of environmental improvements and mitigation measures as well as funding for future research and projects.

In addition to consulting local residents, the Power Authority has worked closely with representatives from the state Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and New York Rivers United to identify impacts to the St. Lawrence River and the surrounding environment. Besides NYPA's hydropower project, other influences on the river come from the St. Lawrence Seaway, the operations of Ontario Power Generation and the regulation of Lake Ontario water levels by the International Joint Commission.



*Studies and field work now under way will lead to new projects designed to preserve and enhance the St. Lawrence River environment for the benefit of humans and wildlife alike.*

As part of its new license, NYPA will design, construct, maintain and monitor 10 Habitat Improvement Projects throughout the power project's boundaries at a cost of \$8.4 million. These projects range from nesting platforms for osprey and loons to hundreds of acres of grassland that provide nesting areas for northern harrier, upland sandpiper, various waterfowl and other birds.

Significant work is also planned for the Wilson Hill Wildlife Management Area, built by the Power Authority in the 1950s and managed today by state environmental officials. NYPA will spend \$9.4 million to rehabilitate dikes and other water-control structures on Wilson Hill. Recreational facilities, including new trails and viewing platforms, will also be improved at Wilson Hill.



The impact of the St. Lawrence-FDR project on eel migration has been studied extensively as part of NYPA's hydro project relicensing. The new federal license includes provisions for an up-stream fish ladder to be built at the power dam at a cost of \$1.5 million.

Prior to the start of any construction, additional studies will be performed in the vicinity of the various enhancements; some of these studies began this year. Work on the enhancement projects is scheduled to start in the spring and be completed over the next 10 years, with follow-up studies and monitoring to be conducted through 2015.

NYPA's license also includes payments to establish three new funds to address fish, wildlife and ecological issues: \$3.9 million for future Habitat Improvement Projects; \$1 million for a St. Lawrence River Research and Education Fund; and \$24 million for a Fish Enhancement, Mitigation and Research Fund. Administration of the first two funds will include stakeholder input while the third will rely on guidelines for aquatic species established under the Federal Power Act. ♦



## LOCAL REACTION REFLECTS SUPPORT FOR NEW POWER PROJECT LICENSE

Local support was always key to the Power Authority's efforts to relicense its St. Lawrence-FDR Power Project.

Starting in 1996, representatives from North Country towns, villages and school districts played an active role in helping achieve the cooperative relicensing agreement that formed the basis of NYPA's license application. So when the news broke on Oct. 22 that federal regulators had approved a new 50-year license for the Massena-based facility, local officials were pleased with the results of their efforts.

"As chairman of the Local Government Task Force, I want to congratulate and thank Governor Pataki, our representatives in the State Senate and Assembly and my task force colleagues for their assistance and commitment to getting the job done right," said Lisbon Town Supervisor Roger Waters.

"I am extremely pleased the Power Authority has received its license," said state Sen. Jim Wright. "This will benefit the North Country economy and its communities."

NYPA's new license "provides long-term stability to the North Country's economic engine, low-cost power that creates and retains jobs," said Massena Village Mayor Ken MacDonnell. "It also includes financial assistance to local governments that will provide necessary funding to our communities and schools."

Other local officials expressing support for the new license were state Sen. Ray Meier, Assemblywoman Dede Scozzafava, Louisville Town Supervisor Larry Legault, Massena Town Supervisor Sanford Cook, Waddington Town Supervisor Bill Dalton and Waddington Village Mayor Liz Phillips. ♦

**THE NEW YORK POWER AUTHORITY**—The New York Power Authority is the nation's largest state-owned public power organization and one of New York's leading electricity suppliers. It operates 17 generating facilities and more than 1,400 circuit-miles of transmission lines. It sells power to job-producing companies; to municipal electric systems and rural cooperatives; to government agencies; to private utilities for resale, without profit, to their customers; and to neighboring states, under federal requirements. A non-profit, public benefit corporation, the Power Authority does not use tax revenues or state credit.



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