

Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman
Hearing Memorandum

October 6, 2017

To: All Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Chris Marklund
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Hearing: **Legislative Hearing on H.R. 219 (Rep. Don Young)**, To correct the Swan Lake hydroelectric project survey boundary and to provide for the conveyance of the remaining tract of land within the corrected survey boundary to the State of Alaska.
October 11, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.; 1334 Longworth HOB.

H.R. 219 (Rep. Don Young), “*Swan Lake Hydroelectric Project Boundary Correction Act*”

Bill Summary

H.R. 219, introduced by Rep. Don Young (R-AK-At Large) would direct the Secretary of the Interior, after consultation with the U.S. Forest Service, to correct the boundary of the Swan Lake Hydro Electric Project in Southeast Alaska and convey any additional land for the project to the State of Alaska.

Cosponsors

None

Invited Witnesses

Panel I

The Honorable Don Young

Member of Congress, Alaska At-Large

Panel II

Mr. Trey Acteson

Chief Executive Officer

Southeast Alaska Power Agency

Ketchikan, AK

Background

The Swan Lake Hydroelectric Project is a remote facility located approximately 22 air miles northeast of Ketchikan, Alaska.¹ The facility is operated by the Southeast Alaska Power Agency

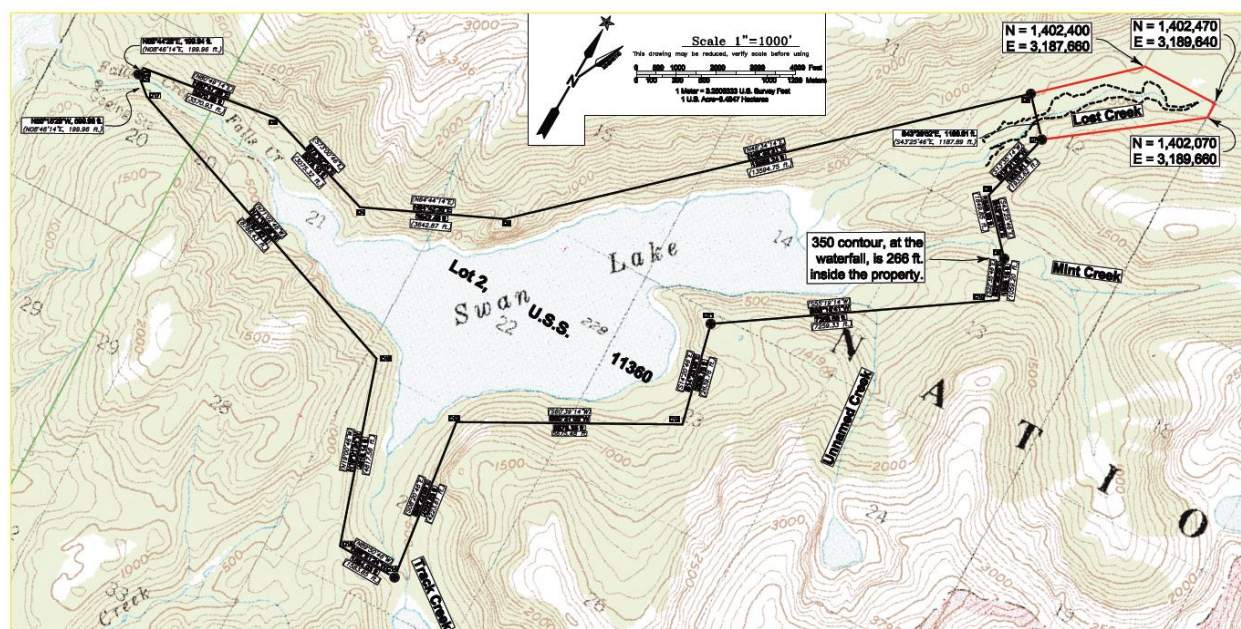
¹ SEAPA Hydro, “Swan Lake Hydro Facility,” Southeast Alaska Power Agency, 2013. <http://www.seapahydro.org/Swan-Lake-Hydro-Facility.php>

(SEAPA), a regional Joint Action Agency of the State of Alaska.² The project was initiated by the State of Alaska in 1980 and placed into service in 1984.³

The Swan Lake Hydroelectric Project is comprised of an elliptical concrete thin arch dam, 174 feet high and 430 feet long at its crest.⁴ The corresponding reservoir has a usable storage capacity of 86,000 acre feet and a surface area of approximately 1,500 acres.⁵

The project's powerhouse contains two turbine generating units with an installed capacity of 25 megawatts. The project and associated facilities supply wholesale power to the municipal utilities serving the cities of Petersburg, Wrangell, and Ketchikan⁶ with a combined population of 19,395 residents.⁷

At the time the project entered service, a future 15-foot increase in reservoir elevation was anticipated as a second phase to the project, which would raise the elevation of the reservoir from an elevation of 330 feet to 345 feet (plus a 5 foot buffer).⁸ As a result, in 1994 the State of Alaska sought a land selection of 1,500 acres of land inside the Tongass National Forest, sufficient land to secure the inundation area of the reservoir at the 350 foot elevation level. The land conveyance from the federal government to the State of Alaska was granted in 1997.



Source: Southeast Alaska Power Authority; courtesy of Rep. Don Young's office (AK-At Large)

In 2012, SEAPA conducted a land survey of the reservoir property as part of its due diligence before raising the height of the dam to its final anticipated height of 345 feet. The survey discovered an

² SEAPA Hydro, "About Us," Southeast Alaska Power Agency, 2013. <http://www.seapahydro.org/about-us.php>

³ Senate Report 115-98, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/115th-congress/senate-report/98/1>

⁴ SEAPA Hydro, "Swan Lake Hydro Facility." <http://www.seapahydro.org/Swan-Lake-Hydro-Facility.php>

⁵ SEAPA Hydro, "Swan Lake Hydro Facility." <http://www.seapahydro.org/Swan-Lake-Hydro-Facility.php>

⁶ Information provided to the Committee by Representative Don Young of Alaska's Office

⁷ Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, "2016 Population Estimates by Borough, Census Area, and Economic Region" <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/>

⁸ SEAPA Hydro, "Swan Lake Reservoir Expansion" Southeast Alaska Power Agency, 2013. http://www.seapahydro.org/exp/pdfs/White_Paper/swl_white_paper.pdf

error in the 350-foot elevation contour on reference maps utilized during the state selection process.⁹ The 2012 survey concluded raising the dam to its final anticipated height would inundate an additional 25.8 acres of federal land along one of Swan Lake's tributaries.¹⁰

According to information provided by Congressman Don Young's (R-AK) office, there is no disagreement among the federal and state agencies that the 25.8 acres of Forest Service lands currently within the Project boundary remain within the Project boundary solely due to an error in establishing lands to be transferred to the State of Alaska back in 1997.¹¹

H.R. 219 would correct the error by requiring the Secretary of the Interior, after consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, to survey the exterior boundaries of the tract of Federal land within the Swan Lake Hydroelectric Project boundary and transfer the surveyed federal land within the project to the State of Alaska.

Administration Position

The Administration position is unknown at this time.

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill. A CBO cost estimate prepared on nearly identical Senate legislation, S. 267, found that implementing the bill would have no significant effect on the federal budget.

⁹ SEAPA Hydro, "Costs and Benefits Analysis for Increasing Storage at Swan Lake," Southeast Alaska Power Authority, 2012. http://www.seapahydro.org/exp/pdfs/White_Paper/cost-benefit.pdf

¹⁰ SEAPA Hydro, "Costs and Benefits Analysis for Increasing Storage at Swan Lake," Southeast Alaska Power Authority, 2012. http://www.seapahydro.org/exp/pdfs/White_Paper/cost-benefit.pdf

¹¹ Information provided to the Committee by Representative Don Young of Alaska's Office