

Current dam operator seeks to transfer it's license, as officials work to find an acceptable solution internationally

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The Maine-based pulp mill that is looking to surrender its license on the Forest City Dam is saying they are willing to transfer ownership of the dam to a new owner along with land and water rights.

In a press release last week, Woodland Pulp Environmental Manager Scott Beal said the company was seeking to clarify "the misperception that it will simply open the dam gates and draw down the impoundment without considering public benefits."

The release reiterated that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued Woodland Pulp a new 30-year license on Nov. 23, 2015, pointing out the license itself acknowledges the cost of operating the project "is at least \$6 million more than the generation benefits the storage dam would provide."

Additionally, the release said, the structuring of the license requires "considerable expenditures early in the life of the license."

Beal said the company indicated to FERC and others it was willing to continue to operate, and even underwrite maintenance upkeep and safety if the new licence had not included additional operating costs and complexities

"Let me make it perfectly clear that Woodland Pulp does not want those who live near or visit the lake, who enjoy the fishing, boating, and natural beauty of the area, to lose it," Beal said in the release. "Those of us who work at Woodland also enjoy the natural beauty and benefits of the lake system behind the Forest City Dam. Woodland Pulp seeks a community-based solution

that is fair and that, as much as possible, maintains what has been in place for decades.”

The release said misrepresentations of the situation have arisen, including assertions that a simple solution would be Woodland Pulp permanently setting dam gates at a certain level. The release explained setting the gates at a static state is not possible because of water flow safety and dam stability.

Speaking with the Bugle-Observer on Thursday morning, Beal said Woodland Pulp has had parties show interest in taking over the license of the dam.

“We are working through those discussions,” Beal said, adding that he can’t speak in detail on those discussions, but he is hopeful.

“It would be an ideal solution for the folks that live on, in, or around East Grand Lake.”

Bill Appleby, Canadian Co-Chair of the International St. Croix River Watershed Board which is under the International Joint Commission, told the Bugle-Observer a change in ownership of the dam, as suggested by Woodland Pulp, has been done before.

“I think since I’ve been on the board there was Georgia-Pacific, and then Domtar [Maine Corp.] and now it is Woodland. Basically, as long as they respect the International Joint Commission order on the dam, then we are fine with a change in ownership.”

Asked about FERC accepting Woodland Pulp’s application last week, Appleby said it is a domestic process for FERC in the U.S., and IJC and the boards don’t participate in such process in either the U.S. or Canada.

“We won’t make any intervention,” he said of the 30-day time limit for responses to FERC’s approval. “We will be bringing it to the attention of the two governments when we have our

annual meeting in Washington in early May.”

He said he is also aware that, in Canada, the government departments are following the issue surrounding Forest City Dam with Global Affairs Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans being involved.

Appleby said under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, IJC will take any violation of present orders or need for changes to orders to the government. For now, he said, that won't happen until FERC makes a decision on the surrender of the dam.

Appleby said the International Joint Commission reports twice a year in Washington and Ottawa, giving updates on any issues occurring in the basin or possible violations of orders. He said during these week-long meetings, they will sit down with Global Affairs Canada and the State Department to discuss issues.

Appleby said the International St. Croix River Watershed Board will also hold its annual meeting in McAdam this June.

“We may have more information for exactly what is going on by then,” said Appleby. “I expect we will get a good turnout for that meeting, based on my experience when we had other issues in the basin.”

Consul General of Canada David Alward, based out of Boston, has also taken on the Forest Dam issue. Speaking with the Bugle-Observer on Wednesday, Alward, who is the Consul General responsible for New England, said he is working with the Canadian Embassy in Washington, Department of Oceans and Fisheries, and Department of Environment on concerns surrounding Woodland Pulp application to surrender its FERC license.

“This is not something that we just become aware of,” said Alward. “We have been on this for some time now. I've certainly communicated with stakeholders and local politicians on it. There

are a lot of people obviously that have a lot of interest in it.”

He said Canadian Federal departments have been closely looking over all aspects of the application by Woodland Pulp, from potential impacts on the St. Croix River and nearby lakes to impacts on fish stock and habitat, and issues with the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909.

“The various departments are doing their research,” said Alward. “We certainly have been in contact with numerous stakeholders and ... local political leaders who have raised concerns as well. Canada intends to raise the concerns with the U.S. government through appropriate channels.”

When asked about a potential resolution, Alward said it is too early “to say exactly what any recommendation would be.”