



Aboriginal Plant Use Mitigation Plan 2015-2016 Annual Report

Site C Clean Energy Project

Reporting period: June 5, 2015 to May 31, 2016

Date: July 5, 2016

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1 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 Description of Site Preparation and Construction Activities During the Reporting Period

Construction of the Site C Clean Energy Project has been underway since late July 2015. During this period, construction crews have been undertaking site preparation activities in advance of the main civil works contractor's mobilization to site. These activities included the following: clearing trees and vegetation at the dam site, upgrading public roads, building construction access roads at the dam site, constructing a 1,600-person worker accommodation facility, excavation and slope stabilization, and completion of a temporary construction bridge.

The reporting period for this annual report coincides generally with the first year of Project construction.

2 Objective and Scope

2.1 Objective of the Aboriginal Plant Use Mitigation Plan

The objective of the June 5, 2015 Aboriginal Plant Use Mitigation Plan (APUMP) is to fulfill the requirements of Decision Statement condition 14 and Environmental Assessment Certificate conditions 25 and 26. The APUMP outlines the approach to mitigation that will be followed during the construction phase, and as site specific opportunities are identified within the project

activity zone for reclamation activities that support plants of high Aboriginal value as well as relocation of rare plants of high traditional Aboriginal value. The mitigation measures related to Aboriginal plant use are summarized in Volume 3, Chapter 19, Table 19.15 of the EIS and set out Appendix D of the Plan.

The Plan covers the Project Activity Zone (PAZ) as described in the EIS and as defined in the federal Decision Statement section 1.15.

2.2 Scope and Reporting Period

This annual report summarizes the implementation of the mitigation measures described in section 4.0 the APUMP in the first year of the plan's implementation; June 2015 through May 2016. In some cases, consultation and engagement with Aboriginal groups on measures described in the Plan that took place prior to this period are also summarized here for context.

3 Ground Truthing

Starting in 2014, BC Hydro initiated ground truthing programs with the purpose of engaging with Aboriginal land users, including registered trapline holders, to verify and accurately locate Aboriginal land use information, and to identify concerns related to specific features, or sites that may be affected by the Project. In particular, BC Hydro is seeking to verify features such as plant harvesting areas (specifically medicinal and food plants), the location of burial sites, and the location of habitation sites, including when and how they are used by Aboriginal groups.

The APUMP describes the scope of the ground truthing program and how the information gained during ground truthing is used to inform mitigation measures related to plants of high traditional Aboriginal value. The Cultural Resources Mitigation Plan describes how ground truthing information related to habitation sites (including access to those sites) is used to develop mitigation measures related to those sites. The Heritage Resources Management Plan does the same with respect to burial sites.

Unless otherwise indicated, the communications summarized below are sent out to all Aboriginal groups named in the Environmental Assessment Certificate (EAC) and federal Decision Statement (FDS): Saúlteau First Nations, West Moberly First Nations, Prophet River First Nation, Blueberry River First Nations, Doig River First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, Halfway River First Nation, Fort Nelson First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation, Métis Nation British Columbia, Kelly Lake Métis Settlement Society, Duncan's First Nation, and Dene Tha' First Nation.

3.1 Invitations to Participate in Ground Truthing

BC Hydro has invited Aboriginal groups to participate in ground truthing in order to verify site-specific harvesting, habitation and other important cultural sites prior to the commencement of construction, with an initial focus on the dam site area. Letters of invitation are described further below.

On **February 13, 2014**, BC Hydro sent letters to Aboriginal groups regarding future consultation which included an invitation to discuss the possibility of ground truthing areas that have been identified or areas that community members are prepared to identify as being important, including medicinal and other plant collection areas.

On **September 24, 2014**, BC Hydro sent a letter to Aboriginal groups to invite their community members to participate in the ground truthing program. Specific dates were identified in October 2014 during which ground truthing could be conducted at the proposed dam site.

On **April 7, 2015**, BC Hydro met with Treaty 8 Tribal Association (Saulteau First Nations, West Moberly First Nations, and Prophet River First Nation) as well as representatives from McLeod Lake Indian Band's Lands Department to provide more information regarding the invitations that had been sent to conduct ground truthing. BC Hydro advised that the activities were discussed in the Aboriginal Plant Use Mitigation Plan and the Cultural Resources Mitigation Plan, and indicated that funding would be available to support Aboriginal group participation. BC Hydro requested that the invitation to attend be extended to members and elders, and proposed to meet in the near future to discuss an approach and required resources.

On **May 20, 2015**, BC Hydro sent a letter to Aboriginal groups as a follow-up to the September 24, 2014 letter. BC Hydro wrote to acknowledge that they wish to engage with Aboriginal groups in a ground truthing initiative and to invite their community members to participate in the ground truthing program starting in June 2015.

On **November 26, 2015** at the Communications Forum, BC Hydro presented an overview of the ground truthing program and discussed the invitations sent to Aboriginal groups to participate in the program. The presentation is available to Aboriginal groups for download on the Site C Information for Aboriginal Groups SharePoint site.

On **January 8, 2016**, BC Hydro sent a letter to Aboriginal groups and expressed a desire to coordinate ground truthing to identify areas of interest within the transmission line activity area in addition to the general project area.

On **March 11, 2016**, BC Hydro sent a follow-up letter of invitation to Aboriginal groups to participate in ground truthing. In its invitation, BC Hydro noted areas, based on Traditional Land Use Reports provided in the EIS, having significant traditional value or use to each Aboriginal group that it wished ground truth, including areas where construction activities were planned for the coming year.

On **April 21, 2016**, BC Hydro provided an overview of the ground truthing program and its plan for 2016 as part of BC Hydro's presentation/handout materials at the Communications Forum. The presentation is also available to Aboriginal groups for download on the *Site C Information for Aboriginal Groups* SharePoint site.

3.2 Ground Truthing Activities Conducted

Doig River First Nation (DRFN): At their request, DRFN has carried out ground truthing largely independent of any involvement from BC Hydro. In June 2015, DRFN conducted ground truthing in the vicinity of the dam site area and it is BC Hydro's understanding that DRFN has also conducted at least one additional site visit in the dam site area. At the time of writing, DRFN is in the process of completing their report which will be shared with BC Hydro.

Halfway River First Nation (HRFN): At their request, HRFN will carry out ground truthing activities independent of any involvement from BC Hydro. Activities are anticipated to commence in this reporting period. HRFN's Traditional Land Use/Ground truthing report will be shared with BC Hydro upon completion.

McLeod Lake Indian Band (MLIB): BC Hydro and MLIB conducted ground truthing activities in the vicinity of the dam site area in June 2015. The ground truthing report has been reviewed and finalized by participants. BC Hydro remains open to ground truthing additional areas of interest with McLeod Lake land users.

Saulteau First Nations (SFN) registered trapline holders: BC Hydro and registered SFN trapline holders conducted ground truthing activities in the vicinity of the transmission line right-of-way and dam site area in the summer and fall of 2014 and summer of 2015. A ground truthing report has been reviewed and finalized by participants.

None of the other Aboriginal groups have yet directly responded to BC Hydro's invitation to carry out ground truthing.

3.3 Ground Truthing Reports

Results of ground truthing trips conducted to date are summarized in individual reports that are prepared by BC Hydro's traditional land use consultant (Traditions Consulting Ltd.) and shared with the ground truthing participants for review and comment prior to finalization.

To date, ground truthing reports have been prepared and reviewed by participants from MLIB and SFN registered trapline holders. These reports are considered confidential and cannot be shared with an external audience in their entirety, but key information gained from the reports is summarized in section 3.4 below.

3.4 Plants of High Traditional Aboriginal Value Identified Through Ground Truthing

Aboriginal land users identified plants as having medicinal and food values during the 2014 and 2015 ground truthing activities. Table 1 shows the food plants and medicinal plants that were identified as plants typically harvested by land users during ground truthing.

Table 1 Food and Medicinal Plants Identified Through Ground Truthing

Alder (bark, green buds)	Fireweed	Raspberry
Arnica orchid	Gooseberries	Rat root
Aspen bark	High-bush (mountain) blueberries	Red willow
Bearberries (a.k.a. kinnikinnick)	High-bush cranberries	Rose (wild)
Birch, fungus	Horsetail	Rosehips
Bluebell (a.k.a. lungwort)	Huckleberries	Saskatoon berries
Blueberries	Juniper	Soapberries
Bunchberries	Labrador tea	Spruce; tips, bud/cone, gum, pitch, and bark
Chamomile (wild)	Lichen	Stinging nettle
Choke cherries	Lily plants	Strawberries (wild)
Clover	Low-bush blueberries	Tamarack Moss
Dandelions	Peas (wild)	Trapper's (muskeg) tea
Devil's club	Peppermint	Willow, fungus
Diamond willow fungus	Plantain	Yarrow

3.5 Identification of rare plant species

The plant species of high traditional Aboriginal value identified through ground truthing were reviewed against the Red/Blue listed species identified by the BC Conservation Data Centre as well as species listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

Of the species identified in this reporting period, “Rat root” (*Acorus americanus*) is the only rare plant. It is currently Red-listed in BC by the BC Conservation Data Centre. Rat root is a cattail-like plant that grows in ponds, streams and wetlands.

4 Mitigation Measures

The APUMP describes mitigation measures, and measures to be developed in consultation with Aboriginal groups, that meet conditions of the EAC and FDS related to plants of traditional aboriginal value over the duration of Project construction. Moving forward, BC Hydro will continue to consider mitigation measures identified by Aboriginal groups through future ground truthing or other consultation activities.

4.1 Identification of Opportunities for Plant Relocation and Ecological Community Restoration

The CEMP describes the environmental requirements related to soil management, site restoration, and revegetation activities to be implemented by contractors. Reclamation activities for the various project components (dam site area, transmission line, and reservoir shoreline) will be undertaken in the period following construction. Potential locations of reclamation activity include areas on south facing slopes or grasslands, north facing slopes, plateaus, or riparian areas.

BC Hydro continues to work with Aboriginal groups to identify plant species of Aboriginal value through ongoing ground truthing activities. These species will be incorporated into mitigation and compensation measures as appropriate. As draft plans are developed to address the adverse effects of the project on plants traditionally used by Aboriginal groups they will be provided to Aboriginal Groups for review and comment.

4.2 Indigenous Plant Nursery

BC Hydro has entered into a contract with an indigenous plant nursery for supply and delivery of live native grass seeds suitable for dry or hydro seed application to support re-vegetation and reclamation activities. In accordance with EAC condition 26, BC Hydro will make reasonable efforts to source plants and plant seeds of high traditional Aboriginal value from indigenous plant nurseries for use in reclamation activities.

4.3 Information Shared with Aboriginal Groups

FDS condition 14.2 requires BC Hydro to inform Aboriginal groups about Project activities that may affect the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes. This condition is fulfilled through the implementation of the Aboriginal Group Communication Plan (AGCP). Please refer to the AGCP and its annual reports for more information on how BC Hydro is complying with this condition.

4.4 Use of Herbicides and Pesticides

Section 4.3.2 of the APUMP describes the considerations involved in the avoidance or minimization of herbicide and pesticide use during BC Hydro's vegetation management practice. The draft plan was submitted to Aboriginal groups for review and comment in October 2014. Comments received were considered in preparation of the July 5, 2015 version of the APUMP.

In accordance with BC Hydro's Integrated Vegetation Management Plan for Vegetation Rights-of-Way¹, persons using transmission line rights-of-way to collect wild food or medicinal plants are encouraged to notify BC Hydro. Areas with food and medicinal plants will be mapped, and these interests will be considered in planning vegetation management work. Similarly, ground truthing information may be used to inform the planning of vegetation management work with the permission of the Aboriginal groups who have undertaken the ground truthing.

5 Future Ground Truthing

On March 11, 2016, BC Hydro sent a follow-up letter of invitation to Aboriginal groups to participate in ground truthing. BC Hydro will be working with each interested Aboriginal group directly to plan and coordinate ground truthing in the areas of interest in the summer and fall of 2016. More information on these activities will be provided in the 2017 annual report.

Information received through ground truthing activities will inform the development of mitigation measures when the information is received.

¹ Available for download on BC Hydro's website at https://www.bchydro.com/content/dam/hydro/medialib/internet/documents/safety/pdf/safety_-_ivmp_web.pdf