

Seminoe Pumped Storage

Public Information Meeting

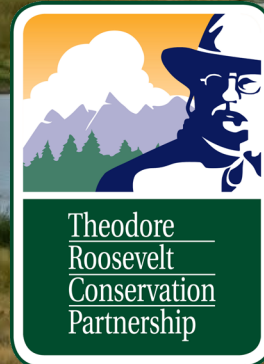


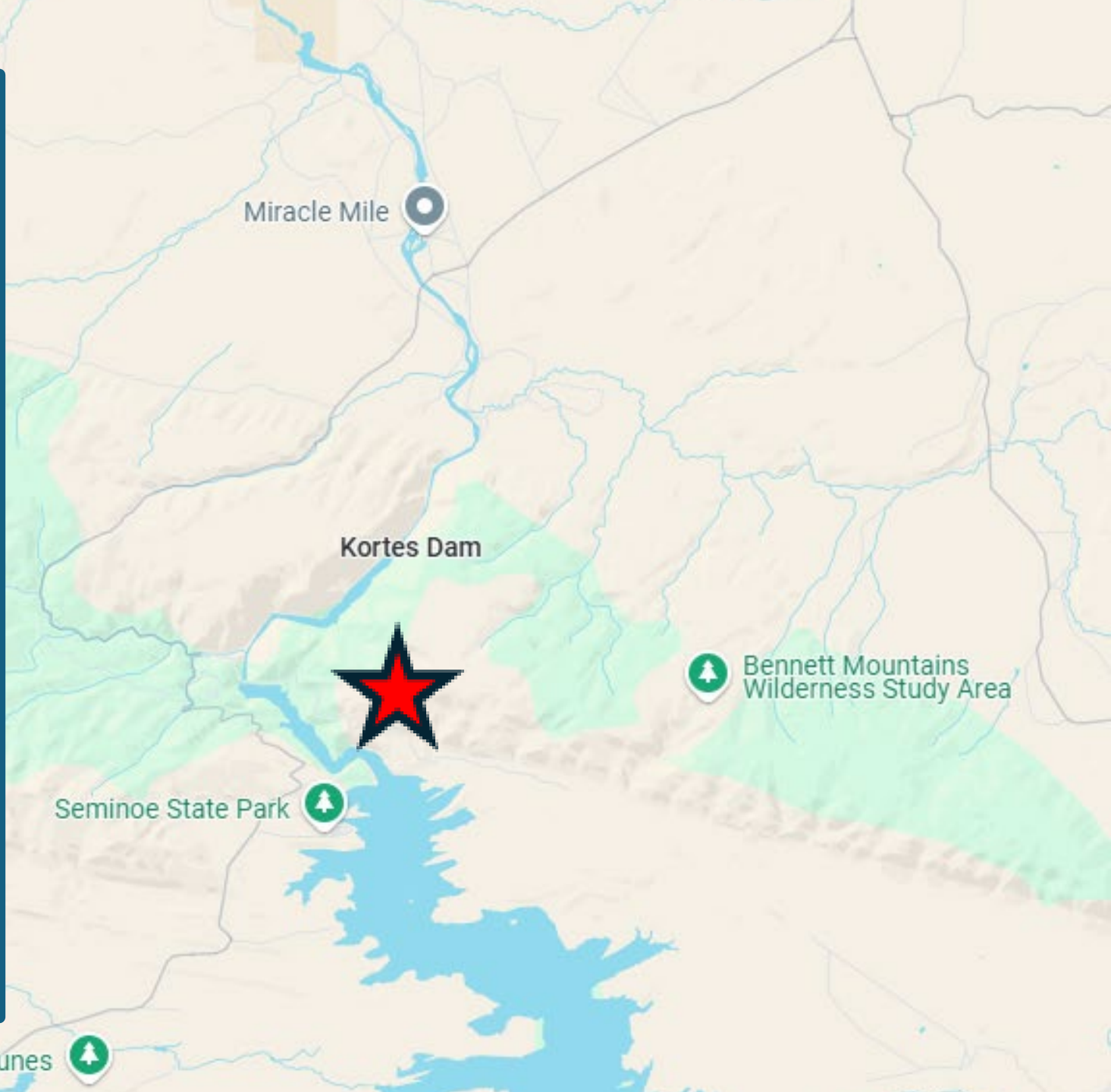
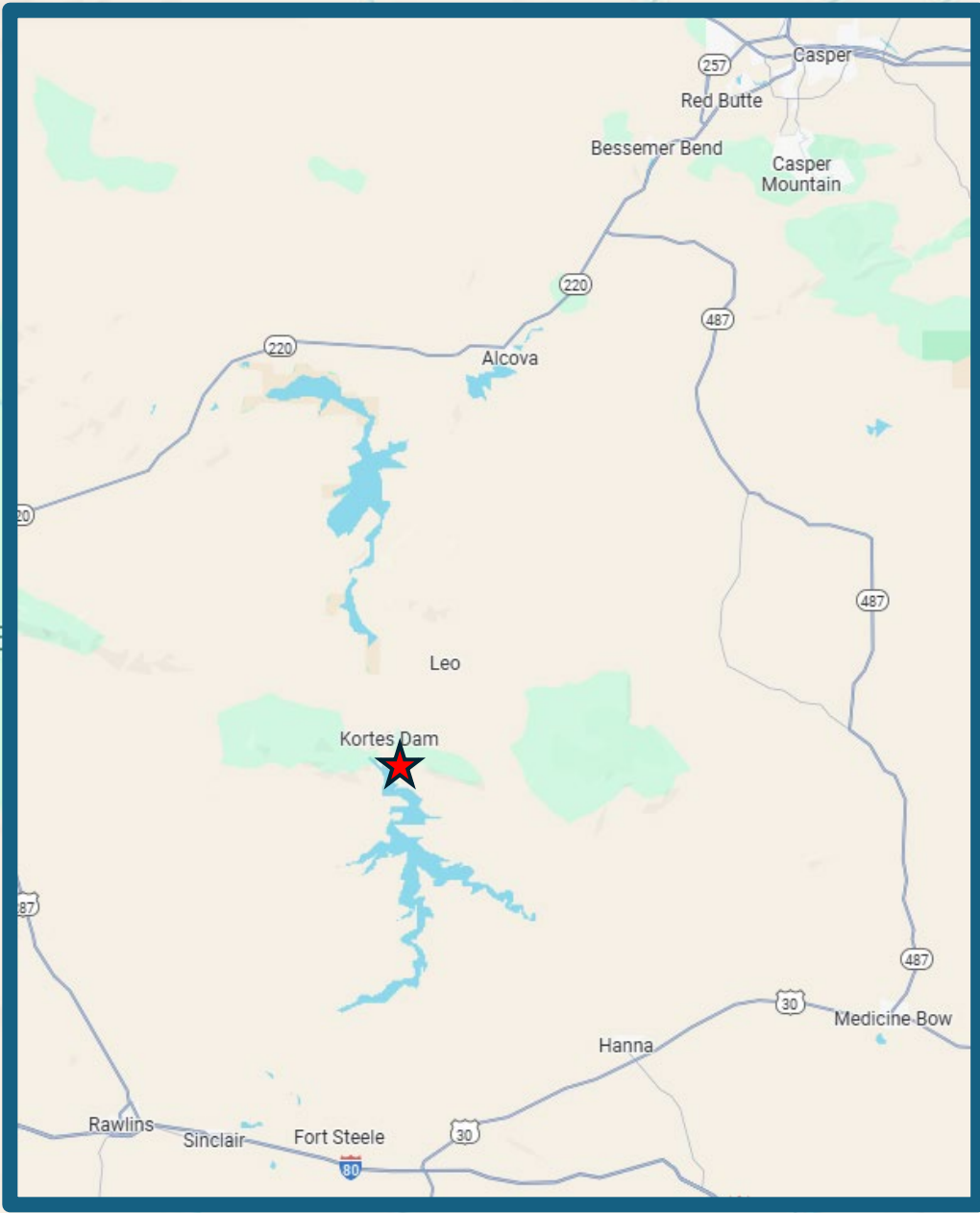
Photo: Visit Carbon County

What to expect

- Goals of this meeting
 - Understand project, process, potential impacts
- Expectations
 - Civility and honesty
- Meeting Agenda
 - rPlus presentation
 - Public process and public record analysis
 - Q&A
 - Next steps – stay involved



Photo: Oliver Oshenhurt





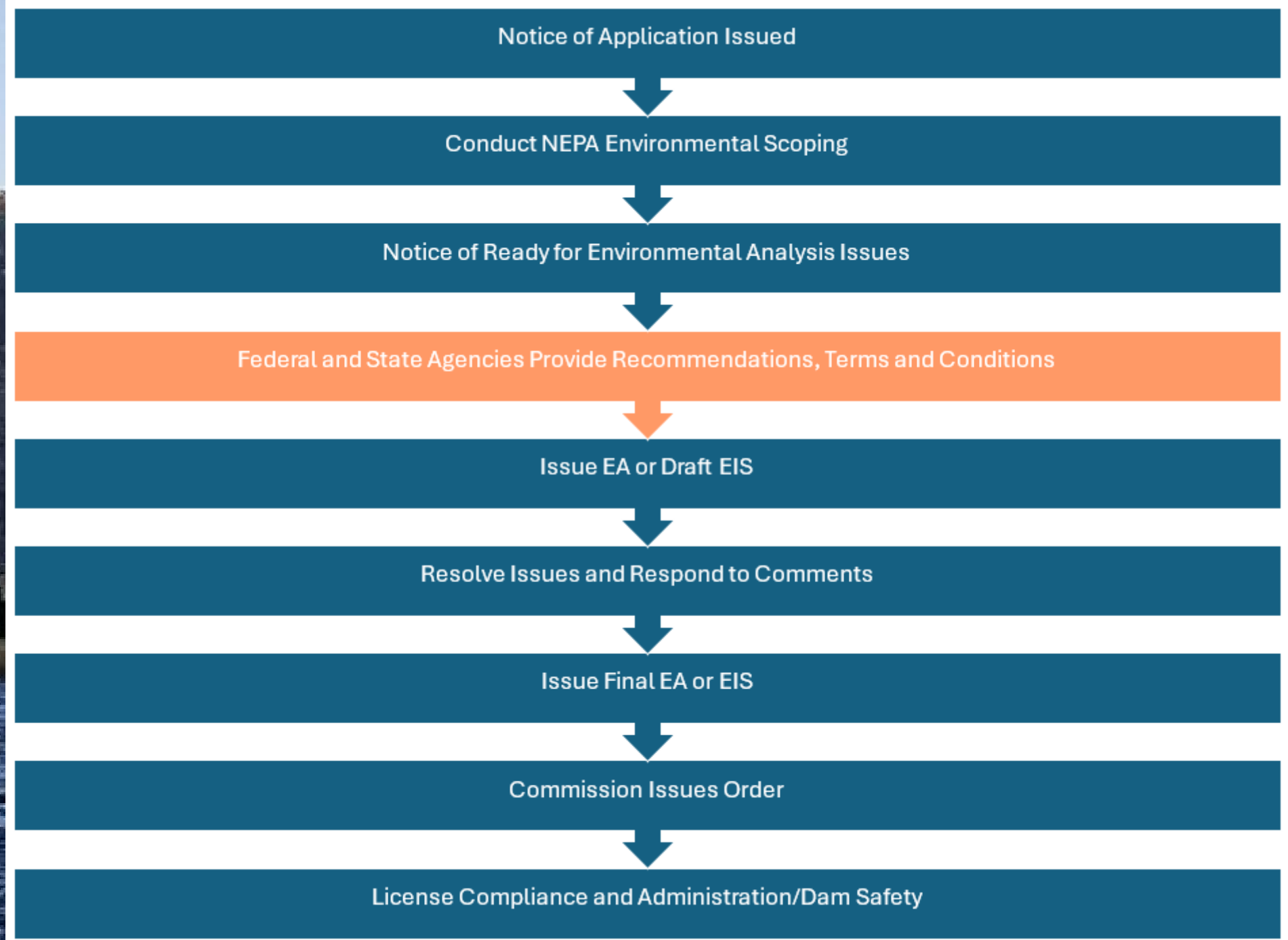
Agency Involvement

AGENCY/ENTITY	PERMIT/APPROVAL	STATUS
Carbon County Department of Planning and Development	Conditional Use Permit	To be filed at conclusion of NEPA process.
Wyoming State Engineers Office	Water Use Permit	To be filed before start of construction.
Wyoming State Engineers Office	SW-3 Reservoir Permit	Application submitted March 2023
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ)	401 Water Quality Certification	To be filed at completion of Water Quality Study (Q4 2024)
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Industrial Siting Division (ISD)	Wyoming Industrial Siting Council Permit	To be filed at conclusion of NEPA process.
Wyoming Public Service Commission	Certificate of Public Convenience and Need (CPCN)	To be filed at conclusion of NEPA process.
Western Area Power Administration	Agreement to relocate a segment of existing transmission lines on the project site	Scoping of work in process.
US Army Corps of Engineers	CWA Section 404 Permit	Application submitted September 2023
Bureau of Land Management	Project features Right-of-Way Grant and Cooperating Agency with FERC National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) process	Application submitted June 2022. Will be connected to FERC licensing.
Bureau of Reclamation	Lease of Power Privilege (LOPP) and Cooperating Agency with FERC NEPA process	Preliminary Lease of Power Privilege executed April 2021.
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)	Operational License, lead agency for NEPA process	Final License Application submitted January 2023.

Chart: rPlus Hydro

Photo: Ian McCreary

FERC Hydropower Application Process



Public Record Review

A person in waders is fly fishing in a river. The person is standing in the water, casting a line. The background shows a rocky hillside and a cloudy sky at dusk or dawn. The water is dark and rippling.

- **Aquatic Resources:**
 - Water Quality
 - Temperature
 - Turbidity
 - Fisheries
- **General Comments/Alternatives to Proposed Action**
- **Dam Safety/ Geology and Soil Resources**
- **Terrestrial Resources**
- **Recreation, Land Use, Aesthetics**

Aquatic Resources (1)

- Scoping Document 1
 - Effects of project construction on **water quality** (including water temperatures, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity) in the Seminoe Reservoir and downstream North Platte River.
 - Effects of project operation (including water withdrawals for initial fill and annual make-up water and pumping/generation operation) and maintenance on water quality (including water temperatures, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity) in the Seminoe Reservoir and downstream North Platte River.
 - Effects of project construction, operation, and maintenance on **fish resources and aquatic habitat** in the Seminoe Reservoir and downstream North Platte River.
 - Effects of project construction, operation, and maintenance on **wetlands** including water flow in seasonal and ephemeral springs.
 - Effects of construction, operation, and maintenance activities on **groundwater quality**, recharge, and flow.
 - Effects of **entrainment** and impingement associated with pumping operations on fish resources in the Seminoe Reservoir.
 - Effects of project construction, operation, and maintenance on ongoing operations at Reclamation's **Seminoe and Kortes Dams** (including water storage and flow releases, etc.).

Aquatic Resources (2)

- Where will construction, and operations water rights come from
 - FERC – If permitted operational water rights must be acquired, Construction – temporary use agreements
- Concern over water level fluctuations on fish and aquatic organisms
 - FERC – This will be evaluated during environmental review
- Request to analyze effects of the project on “water quality and riparian areas, including **potential rapid water level fluctuations, water temperature variations**, impacts to **downstream riparian habitats**, and **groundwater**.”
 - FERC – This will be evaluated from Seminoe to Pathfinder
- **Ice thickness** and winter reservoir operations should be evaluated
 - FERC – This will be evaluated
- Request to evaluate Seminoe Reservoir sport fisheries for **rainbow trout, brown trout, and walleye** which can be susceptible to changes in water quality parameters, particularly **temperature and dissolved oxygen** concentrations.
 - FERC – These species/issues will be evaluated
- **Actual water monitoring data** for water temperature and dissolved oxygen should be used instead of modeling data
 - FERC says applicant’s water quality modeling study followed generally accepted practices and provides sufficient data to inform an analysis of potential effects to water quality at the project. FERC disagrees that a higher level of precision is needed to characterize overall water quality conditions.

General Comments / Alternatives to Proposed Action

- Questions about permitting on State lands, as well as revision of the Rawlins RMP
 - FERC – These issues will be addressed during NEPA
- Questions why a project with a net-zero benefit should be permitted given the range of impacts to various resources
 - FERC: The project would contribute to power grid stability
- **This is a major action that requires a full EIS**
 - FERC – FERC will decide after the scoping process whether an EA or EIS is warranted
- Question is power will be used in WY or elsewhere
 - FERC – The application states the project will provide grid reliability for WY and the greater region
- Several comments **about the range of alternatives considered**, i.e. more alternatives than just the project as proposed and nothing should be evaluated
 - FERC does not design or site projects. Rather it determines based on a sufficiently developed license application whether a proposed project can be constructed and operated in a fashion that is the public interest and the best comprehensive use of the waterway.
- BCH suggested **the scope of cumulative effect analysis** for water quality and fisheries (i.e., 27-mile-long reach from the upper extent of Seminoe Reservoir downstream to Pathfinder Dam) **“seems excessive** and may need to be re-evaluated.”
 - “Staff have determined that ongoing operation of Seminoe Dam and Reservoir and the downstream Kortes Dam and Reservoir could in combination with the proposed project **affect water quality and fish resources** (and their habitat) **in the North Platte River from Seminoe Reservoir downstream through Seminoe and Kortes Dams and through the 5.5-mile-long “Miracle Mile” reach of the river from the tailrace of Kortes Dam to the reservoir for Pathfinder Dam.**”

Dam Safety, Geology, and Soil Resources

- Seminoe Dam is showing some signs of **dam failure** and will need to be rebuilt at some point; will the blasting required to construct the project contribute to premature failure of the dam?
 - FERC: If a license is issued, the FERC dam safety commission will further evaluate (along with an independent board) to ensure that project features are designed to safely withstand all credible loading conditions and ensure safe operating conditions
- **Concerns about spillway** and emergency shutoff
 - Applicant has proposed safety and operational features; spillway would only be used in emergency; applicant will file an Emergency Action Plan if licensed
- Question about ability of **local geology to withstand blasting**, etc during construction
 - Same response as re: dam safety; if license is issued, then specialized team will evaluate safety concerns
- Concerns about reclaiming spoil piles and need to bring in soil from other locations
 - These concerns will be evaluated in environmental review

Terrestrial Resources

- Effects of woody material removal, placement, and disposal should be analyzed
 - This will be evaluated
- Concerns about old growth forests/limber pine
 - FERC – This will be evaluated
- **BLM identifies gaps in species included in applicant's list** (some of which are not in project area); and also points out presence of knapweed
 - FERC – thanks BLM for updated information
- **Concerns over sage grouse** and core sagebrush area
 - FERC – This will be evaluated
- **High quality nesting habitat for raptors**
 - FERC – This will be evaluated
- **Big horn sheep concerns**
 - FERC – This will be evaluated
- **ESA - Effects on Platte River Recovery Implementation Program** should be analyzed
 - FERC – will analyze effects of water withdrawals (i.e., initial fill and annual makeup water) and project operation on the ability to meet downstream flow targets under the Platter River Recovery Implementation Program for listed avian species and pallid sturgeon.

Recreation, Land Use, and Aesthetics

- WY State Parks requested that **recreation impacts** be included
 - FERC agrees
- Potential **impacts on grazing allotments**
 - This will be evaluated
- Impacts from project construction and operation will affect recreation uses; **socioeconomic impacts** should be considered
 - This will be evaluated
- Construction impacts, like widening or improving of existing roads, could negatively impact recreation by making access too easy
 - This will be evaluated
- **Fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, photography may be negatively impacted**
 - Environmental review will include direct effects on recreationists from anticipated construction noise, vibrations, dust/air quality, and lighting as well as indirect effects on recreation resulting from loss of wildlife habitat or effects to water quality and fish.
- Transmission line will impact viewshed
 - Impacts to viewsapes will be analyzed
- Concerns about future eligibility of Bennet Mtn Wilderness Study Area based on new impacts
 - This will be evaluated

Q&A • Please raise your hand on Zoom



Photo: Visit Carbon County

Next Steps / Stay Involved

- How to file a public comment:
 - <https://www.ferc.gov/how-file-comment>
 - Docket Number: **P-14787**
 - Times out after 60 minutes
- Concerns about potential project impacts, this is the time to submit them
- EIS not EA – comments might suggest that scope is great enough to require EIS

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Email List Signup



Photo: Steven Brutger