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12. Dam Relicensing

Recommended Actions:

In developing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for relicensing the St. Louis River dams operated by Minnesota Power, FERC should define optimum aquatic habitat in all sections of the river, including the bypass reaches, and evaluate and quantify the impact of all level of flows through the bypass reaches on aquatic habitat, social and economic considerations.

(1) FERC should:

- (a) Determine the optimum aquatic habitat possible.
 - (b) Assess impacts of reductions from optimum aquatic habitat.
 - (c) Evaluate impacts of flow regimes on power generation.
- (2) Minnesota Power, MDNR, and WDNR should continually improve operations.
- (3) Evaluate flow rates and their effects on fish habitat.

Implementors:

FERC, Minnesota Power, MDNR and WDNR.

Actions Taken:

5/94: Recommendations sent to FERC.

8/94: FERC holds public hearing on EIS.

2/95: Final EIS issued.

8/95: MDNR summary report in file.

4/98: Follow up letter sent to MDNR.

11/00: Letter sent to MDNR.

11/00: MDNR is best suited to address aquatic habitat issue. Minnesota Power's St. Louis River dams were relicensed in July 1995 and will expire in 2035 (40 years). This is being appealed by Minnesota Power and MDNR. FERC licenses dams for 30-50 years. Minnesota Power wants a 50 year license. St. Louis River Dams are considered one project. This is unique. Most dams are considered separately. The state wants the FERC to address this because of the cumulative impact of multiple dams. The MPCA can revoke certification if necessary but FERC does not like to reopen a license. There would have to be a very serious reason.

Project Status:

Needs evaluation. Can anything be done at this time since the dam license will not expire until 2035?