

Site C Clean Energy Project

Virtual Town Hall with Community of Old Fort – Meeting Notes

Thursday, July 16, 2020
4pm – 5pm

Attendees:

BC Hydro Representatives

Old Fort Residents

Agenda:

1. Opening & welcome

- a. Welcomed and thanked everyone for joining us this afternoon

2. Review of agenda

- a. A high-level overview of the call was provided; including a discussion on the possibility of a breach of the cofferdam and the potential impacts to some of the Old Fort property owners.
- b. BC Hydro explained that we would have liked to have done this in person, but due to COVID-19, that it was not possible at this time.
- c. BC Hydro confirmed the PRRD property emergency address numbers that are listed as impacted in the unlikely event of the cofferdam failing.
- d. BC Hydro read out the numbers of the PRRD – 911 property addresses directly adjacent to the Peace River that would have some portion of their property potentially impacted.
- e. The property owners attending the call whose properties would have some portion impacted are were identified.
- f. Old Fort Resident asked if everybody on the impacted properties list had been notified about this meeting. BC Hydro said that they had contacted everyone who they had information for. The Old Fort Resident said that they got less than 24 hours notice for this meeting. BC Hydro apologised for the late notice of this meeting and reassured the Old Fort resident that this was the initiation of what will be an ongoing conversation.

3. River diversion update

- a. BC Hydro provided a diversion tunnel and approach channel update.
- b. Diverting the river through the tunnels is expected to happen between mid-August and mid-September.

- c. The diameter of the tunnels was increased to 10.8 metres, to allow for 3,000 cms combined flows through the tunnels. The tunnels will be capable of passing the largest flow/flood on record. It will be able to withstand a 1 in 200-year flooding event.

4. Cofferdam safety and monitoring

- a. Height of cofferdam was set at elevation 434 metres to be able to withstand a 1 in 200-year flooding event.
- b. This provides approximately 12-14 metres above what the average water level will be in the headpond behind the upstream cofferdam. This extra height will allow for water from a significant event to be contained and passed safely passed the dam site.
- c. BC Hydro has started construction of upstream and downstream cofferdams. One challenge is that BC Hydro has to work around river flows. BC Hydro has built a rockfill berm upstream of the cofferdam, this will take the initial impact of the water and slow the water down. There is a specialist contractor coming on site to install steel-sheet piles into the bedrock. This will help prevent river flowing through the granular material in the lower part of the cofferdam. The steel wall is expected to be completed by mid-October.

5. Monitoring upstream Peace River flows and weather forecasting

- a. The biggest concern is a very large (1 in 200-year) weather system that comes over the Site C area from the Gulf of Mexico in the summer and gives extremely heavy rainfall for three or more days directly over the unregulated portion of the basin including the Halfway River.
 - b. Everyone can access real-time data on rainfall and river flows on the Weather Survey Canada and BC Hydro websites:
https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index_e.html and <https://www.bchydro.com/energy-in-bc/operations/transmission-reservoir-data/hydrometeorologic-data.html> .
- c. BC Hydro has also added another layer of safety upstream, by reserving some buffer space in the Williston Reservoir. This will allow BC Hydro to reduce discharges from the WAC Bennett Dam and Peace Canyon Dam if we were to get a substantial rainstorm and provide more room for the water from the unregulated portion of the basin to pass down the Peace River.
- d. At least 7-14 days before an event, BC Hydro can predict if a storm event may be coming. The closer to the event you get, the more accurate the forecast will be on the incoming storm's path and the amount of precipitation.
- e. Old Fort Resident: Where do you think you'll keep levels in Williston Reservoir for three years? I know you're spilling at the moment.
 - i. BC Hydro: we're doing everything we can to reserve five feet in the Williston Reservoir, which is a lot of buffer space given the surface area of Williston Reservoir. A spill happened over the weekend to control the reservoir. We're getting the reservoir water levels down to make sure we are in a comfortable position for diverting the river and making sure we are prepared in the event of a rain storm.
- f. Old Fort Resident: On July 1st – 3rd we had significant rainfall, if we get the perfect storm are you close to your maximum flow in the diversion tunnels?

- i. BC Hydro: Peace Canyon dam discharge was very low in early July' and that allowed for the flows from the rain event from the Halfway River to pass without impacting Site C.
- ii. The July weather event was smaller than a 1 in 200-year weather event would be.
- iii. BC Hydro: The diversion tunnels do not have water through them yet. We had installed the debris booms before that rainstorm and the debris booms were tested by the storm.

6. Safety and emergency response planning

- a. BC Hydro has been working with the Peace River Regional District (PRRD), local governments and local communities on our emergency response plan.
- b. BC Hydro has plans in place in the unlikely event the cofferdam breached, to show what that event would look like. It would mean properties directly on the Peace River would experience some short-term flooding. A small number would potentially have impacts to their homes.
- c. BC Hydro would like to come and discuss the unlikely possibility of the cofferdam breaching with each of you and what it would look like based on the unique topography at each of your properties. For those few property owners whose homes may be impacted, we will also discuss the feasibility of temporary flood mitigation measures such as sand bags.
- d. BC Hydro wanted to give the community an idea of what kind of a notification period there would be for a significant weather event. If BC Hydro were forecasting that in the next 96 hours that the headpond could get to the 433 metres in elevation point on the cofferdam BC Hydro would then talk to local residents through the PRRD and start to discuss whether the PRRD would need to issue evacuation alerts or orders for the Old Fort area or homes that could be potentially impacted. BC Hydro would also be communicating publicly about an event like this.
- e. If BC Hydro thought the cofferdam was potentially going to breach, we would work with the PRRD and they would consider an evacuation alert, if necessary.

Action:

#001 BC Hydro offered to come and discuss the unlikely possibility of the cofferdam breaching with each of the residents. To discuss what would it look like at each of their properties if there was a breach and were homes might be impacted, if temporary flood mitigation measures like sandbags might be feasible to use.

7. Q&A

- a. Old Fort Resident: in 2016, we were approached about BC Hydro wanting to protect the back channel downstream.
 - i. BC Hydro: we had intended on creating a habitat for fish in the back channel downstream but after the Old Fort slide in 2018, BC Hydro doesn't think it would be safe to do the fish habitat enhancement in that location. That would mean excavation and stabilization of the hill, which could potentially exacerbate things in that area. In light of the ongoing

movement of the slide, we are looking for an alternative area to do the fish habitat enhancement.

- b. Old Fort Resident: Are there any concerns about the stability of the north bank/Old Fort back channel with the rising and falling of river levels?
 - i. BC Hydro: the water flow will speed up inside in the tunnels but after going through the tunnel, the water will return back to its natural velocity. BC Hydro has monitoring in place to respond to any erosion. BC Hydro will have the ability to change the flows, but there won't be much difference in the water levels downstream.
- c. Old Fort Resident: in 2017, BC Hydro wanted to sign some agreements to do work at the back of our properties, is that still going ahead?
 - i. BC Hydro: No, this won't be going ahead, as we won't be doing the back-channel fish enhancement project adjacent to Old Fort.
- d. Old Fort Resident: what can we expect post construction in regard to river flow and the water levels? How will it differ to what it is now, assuming you're not doing the back-channel fish enhancement?
 - i. BC Hydro: this is something we will have to take away and get back to you on. We don't expect there to be much of a change.
 - ii. Old Fort Resident: what is a reasonable timeline to get this information back to us.
 - iii. BC Hydro: we can send an update advising when we expect to be able to provide this information.

Action:

#002 - What can the residents expect post construction with regard to water flow and water levels?

8. Closing

- a. BC Hydro: please feel free to reach out to us at anytime with questions.
- b. BC Hydro: thanked everyone who joined the call for their time and questions.

Meeting ended at 5.03pm