

Peace Water Use Plan Information Update Overview of the Peace Water Use Plan

This overview provides a brief background on the history, scope and implementation of the Peace Water Use Plan.

The Peace River System

The headwaters of the Peace River, a tributary of the Mackenzie River, are located in north-eastern British Columbia (Figure 1). The Peace River is formed by the confluence of the Finlay and Parsnip Rivers flowing from opposite directions in the Rocky Mountain Trench. The W.A.C. Bennett Dam was completed in 1967 and formed the Williston Reservoir which covers approximately 1773 square kilometres (684.6 square miles) at full pool. The Peace Canyon Dam was constructed in 1980, is located at the foot of the Peace River canyon and forms the Dinosaur Reservoir. Dinosaur Reservoir covers approximately 9 square kilometres (3.5 square miles) at full pool.

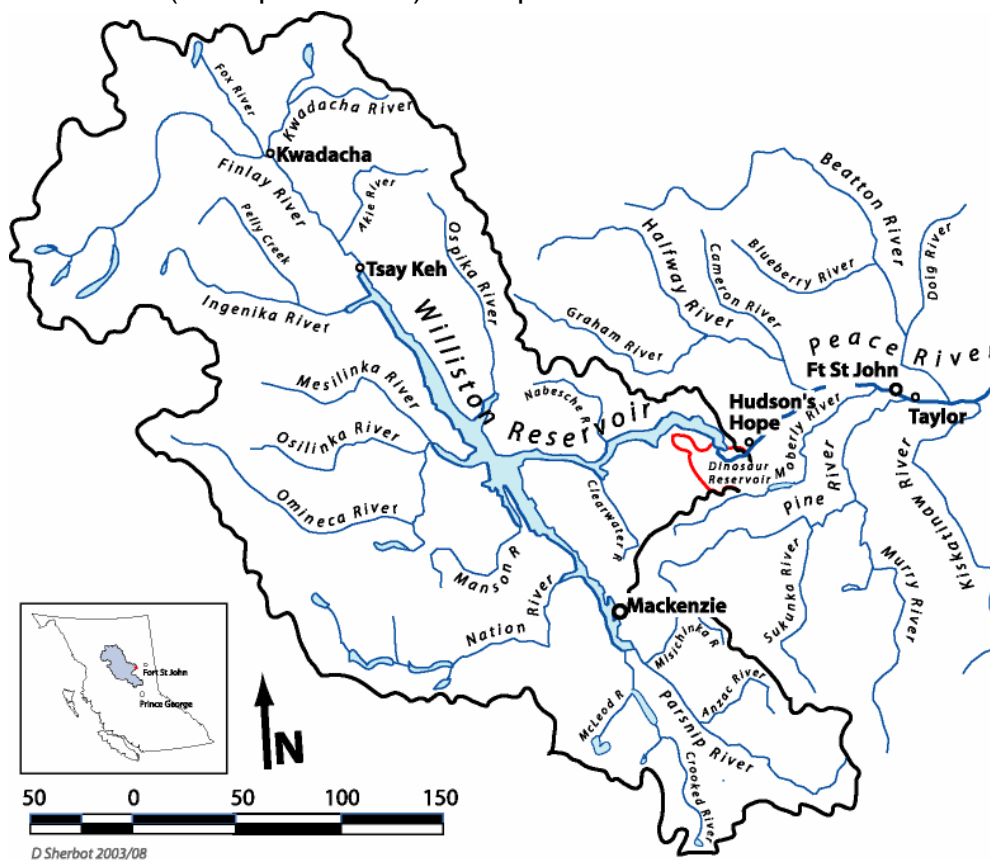


Figure 1: map of physical scope of Peace Water Use Plan

Brief History of the Planning Process

In 1998, the B.C. provincial government issued Water Use Plan Guidelines with an overall goal of finding a better balance between competing uses of water, such as domestic water supply, fish and wildlife, recreation, heritage, flood control and electrical power needs. The Water Use Plan Guidelines called for a multi-interest consultative process to understand public values and develop a preferred operating strategy. This process is described in the provincial [Water Use Plan Guidelines](#) (British Columbia, 1998).

BC Hydro developed 23 Water Use Plans (WUPs) for 31 of its hydroelectric generation facilities through a robust value-analysis process including First Nation and multi-stakeholder engagement from 1999 and 2004. Subsequently, the Comptroller of Water Rights (Comptroller) issued Orders under the provincial Water Act. These Orders reflected the recommendations in the WUPs and directed BC Hydro to undertake site specific actions at each facility. Actions could include:

- Operating changes;
- Physical works projects to enhance recreation and wildlife habitat; and
- Multi-year monitoring studies.

The WUPs and Orders recognize environmental, social and economic values in establishing the basis for facility operations. The WUPs are not intended to be comprehensive watershed management plans or to deal with water management issues associated with other activities in the watershed, such as forestry or mining. Aboriginal rights and title issues and historic grievances arising from the initial construction of the facilities are specifically excluded from WUPs. Compensation for the impacts to fish, wildlife and their supporting habitats from the construction of BC Hydro owned and operated generation facilities is provided through the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program.

Water Use Planning for the Peace Project

The Peace Water Use Plan Committee (Peace WUP Committee) met from February 2001 to May 2003. The Peace WUP process was designed to include all parties whose interests may be affected by the operation of the Peace hydroelectric facilities, including cultural/heritage values, fisheries, wildlife, dust, debris, recreation and power generation. The Peace WUP Committee included representatives from First Nations, local, provincial and federal governments, BC Hydro and public participants.

The Peace WUP Committee was interested in finding the best balance between all interests. They compared the trade-offs associated with different ways of operating and considered physical works projects instead of changing operations to balance objectives. The Peace WUP Committee felt their ability to make decisions was limited by the availability of data, complexity of issues, large geographic scope of the system and two year time-frame to make a final decision. The Peace WUP Committee recommended monitoring studies to collect sufficient information to assist with future decisions on evaluating the different ways of operating and the effectiveness of physical works projects. The two year consultative process and consensus recommendations are summarized in the December 2003 Peace WUP Committee Report.

BC Hydro reflected the recommendations of the Peace WUP Committee in the August 2007 [Peace Water Use Plan](#). The proposed conditions would change the existing operations and were expected to positively affect fisheries and wildlife habitat, shoreline conditions, flood control, and recreation interests. The proposed conditions were also expected to decrease power generation revenues. The Peace WUP was reviewed by provincial and federal agencies and the Comptroller issued the Peace WUP Order (the Order) in August 2007.

Implementation of the Peace WUP Order

The Order directs the implementation of operational constraints and a program of monitoring studies and physical works projects. The physical works projects include improvements to reservoir access; marine radio service; debris removal; and fish and wildlife habitat enhancement projects. The monitoring studies assess the effectiveness of these physical works projects and in some cases, provide information about specific interests such as reservoir dust levels and impacts of spillway operations on fish, wildlife and their habitats.

BC Hydro developed specific Terms of References (TOR) to define how each of the monitoring studies and physical works projects would be implemented. Some TORs were developed in collaboration with or reviewed by First Nations, government agencies or stakeholders. The Comptroller is required to approve each TOR for each project or study before implementation begins.

Implementation of feasibility and monitoring studies began in 2008 and it is expected that all of the monitoring studies will be completed by 2020. Construction of boat ramps and physical works projects were completed between 2013 and 2015. The Peace WUP Annual Report provides regular updates on schedules, budgets and study reports. BC Hydro

expects to spend approximately \$64 million to implement the Order between 2008 and 2020 under the direction of the Comptroller.

The Peace WUP Annual Report, TORs and study reports are available at [Peace Water Use Planning](#).

Interim Review of the Peace Water Use Plan

The interim review of the Peace WUP was to evaluate the minimum operating elevation of Williston Reservoir as well as review results of monitoring studies and physical works projects.

As directed under the Order, BC Hydro was required to implement a feasibility study to determine options for infrastructure issues associated with lower reservoir levels for the District of Mackenzie and the District's three forest industry mills. Industry and the District of Mackenzie reviewed the confidential reports in 2015. In May 2016, the Comptroller found that the feasibility study was complete and BC Hydro had met its obligations for the study under the Order. Following the Comptroller's decision, the minimum operating elevation for Williston Reservoir will remain unchanged at 2147 feet. The minimum operating elevation will not be a component of the interim Peace WUP review.

Therefore, the review will focus solely on monitoring studies and physical works projects and is being done in the form of an Information Update in October 2016. Find more details in the Peace WUP Information Update Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions online at [Peace Water Use Plan Information Update](#).

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