

Bridge River newsletter

Capital projects update—Spring 2025

We acknowledge the Bridge River system is located on the unceded and traditional territory of St'át'imc Nation. We acknowledge the impacts that BC Hydro's system has had on the Nation and the land they have made use of since time immemorial. We share in the responsibility to act as stewards of the land and care for its resources.

Inside this edition of the Bridge River newsletter

This spring, we're excited to share the latest updates from the Bridge River projects. Learn how the [Bridge River 1 Penstock Refurbishment Project was completed ahead of schedule](#), get an inside look at [drilling operations near La Joie Dam](#), explore the [feasibility phase of the La Joie Access and Accommodation Study](#), meet the [new Project Manager bringing Site C expertise to Bridge River](#), and stay up-to-date with the [latest workforce forecast for the area](#).

Collaboration with Tsal'alh helped complete a key project early

Strong partnerships lead to better results, and our recent Bridge River 1 Penstock refurbishment is proof. By collaborating with the Tsal'alh Development Corporation (TDC) and other specialists, we completed this critical project 14 months ahead of schedule.

The Bridge River system is within the traditional territory of the St'át'imc Nation, which includes 11 First Nation communities. Over time, concerns were raised about the impact of higher flows in the Lower Bridge River on fish, habitats, and the St'át'imc Nation way of life. Following nearly two years of discussions, we reached the High-Flow Settlement Agreement (HFSA) with St'át'imc in 2019 which included commitments to address concerns and create local business opportunities. Since then, regular engagement with the St'át'imc Nation has fostered collaboration, capacity building, and new business partnerships, as exemplified by the Bridge River 1 Penstock refurbishment project.



An innovative flume system designed to remove debris from the slope (left) and a worker operates a tight light handling system to ergonomically transport materials on the slope (right).

At Bridge River 1, the penstocks—large pipes carrying water to the powerhouse— had concrete foundations that were covered by debris that had sloughed down the slope over the past 70+ years. When we invited TDC to take on portions of the work, they went further by partnering with geotechnical engineers (Ecora) and civil construction specialists (Norpac) to successfully bid on a larger scope.

Overcoming challenges and finishing early

Crews removed debris covering 40% of the penstock foundations, repaired cracked concrete, and replaced aging supports—all on a near-vertical slope. Safety was a top priority, with careful planning for unstable rock, overhead transmission lines, and extreme weather, including wildfire evacuations. 14 Tsal'alh community members were employed, gaining valuable construction experience.

By engaging early with contractors and refining project methods, we accelerated the schedule by more than a year—freeing up time for other major upgrades at Bridge River 1, including tunnel spoil pile removal (2025) and penstock recoating (2026).

A win for reconciliation and economic growth



Looking up the slope at the completed work.

Through this project alone, we more than doubled the \$20 million procurement target set in the HFSA—a major milestone for local business development.

“This project meant a lot to the community,” says Al Leonard, BC Hydro’s Executive VP, Capital Infrastructure Project Delivery. “It was a significant investment in our relationship and a vote of confidence in their capabilities.”

This is just one example of how we’re working with First Nations across the province to deliver our 10-year capital plan—ensuring that infrastructure upgrades also create lasting community benefits.

WATCH: Fall Drilling at La Joie

Just another day at the office. Last fall, crews used this drill rig mounted on a barge anchored near the La Joie Dam to collect samples and conduct packer testing in the bedrock below the dam.

Packer tests are used to check how water moves through the ground at different pressures and highlights areas that may need to be addressed through project design.

Thank you to Geotech Drilling, the contractor behind the work, who managed to capture this stunning footage. Click the thumbnail to watch the video on [Instagram](#), or [click here](#) to watch on vimeo.

Focus on feasibility: La Joie moves forward on next phase of access and accommodation studies

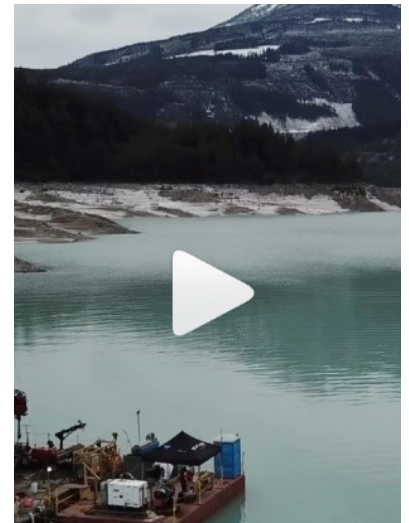
“Like many studies, once you explore these big questions, more questions emerge, and that’s what we’ll be digging into in this next phase.”

Robyn Spencer knows all too well the truth behind the saying, ‘One question leads to another,’ as we released the highlights and the full report for the La Joie Access and Accommodation Study this January. The study aimed to answer some big-picture questions for the project (conceptual analysis) including, “How will workers, materials and equipment access the region?” and “Where will a work camp be built to house workers?”.

After almost two years of desktop studies, numerous site visits, consultation with St’át’imc and engagement with key stakeholders and the public, a set of recommendations was created that will need further study.

Spencer, who is the project’s access and accommodation lead and responsible for Indigenous Consultation, says the next step is to get more specific as the project moves into the feasibility studies.

“Some examples of what this might look like include working with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit on the feasibility of upgrades to Road 40 and figuring out where workers are coming from (worker point of origin). Will weather be clear enough on enough days for the air option to be feasible for worker travel? What does the work camp layout look like? Diving deeper into environmental and socio-economic studies. There’s a lot to do but we’re excited to get going.”



Barge-mounted drilling rig in action near La Joie.



A view of La Joie Dam and its reservoir at the head of the Bridge River system.

For this next phase of study, consultation with St'át'imc will continue following agreement commitments and build on the in-depth collaboration to date. Stakeholder and public engagement will focus on gathering input from specific groups. An example would be meeting with recreational groups who use the Hurley to better understand their use of the area. Larger public updates will continue as work progresses and decisions are made.

Identification of a work camp site and project access route(s) is anticipated by early 2026.

For more information on the study, or project visit: bchydro.com/lajoie

Spotlight on Carmen Brooks: Leading the Bridge River access and accommodation study

We're fortunate to have Carmen Brooks, a seasoned Project Manager, leading the Bridge River Access and Accommodation Study. With extensive experience managing complex projects, Carmen brings a depth of expertise to this important initiative. Under her leadership, the feasibility phase—which will closely examine the leading alternatives identified in **Phase 1**, assessing their benefits, trade-offs, and overall viability—is in very capable hands.

Carmen joined the Site C Project in 2019, where she took on the responsibility of site infrastructure and accommodations, leading two key expansions to the worker camp, which housed a significant number of workers — at its peak, there were around 2,200 workers at the Site C work camps. In addition, Carmen led the outcome of the Site C Cultural Centre's feasibility study. This experience has positioned her perfectly to oversee the feasibility of accommodations for the Bridge River Access and Accommodation Study, a crucial component of the overall project.

I sat down with Carmen to discuss her goals and approach for this project:

What are your main goals for the feasibility phase of the study? “My primary goal is to recommend the best alternative for both BC Hydro and the community. We'll begin by assessing site conditions, addressing factors like geo-technical risks, economic feasibility, and worker accommodation needs. We also aim to attract and retain skilled workers while minimizing impacts on the community and fostering long-term benefits.”

How will you balance worker accommodation needs with minimizing community impact? “We use a structured decision-making approach, which helps us evaluate all factors and select the best alternative while considering the community's well-being.”

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

The **La Joie Access and Accommodation Study report highlights** [PDF, 14.3 MB] as well as the **full report** [PDF, 328.5 MB].

Recommendations in the report will need further evaluation. Key findings are listed below.

Access:

A key outcome of the study is that access to the project site doesn't need to be limited to just one route and that having redundancy in the access plan (i.e., more than one way to get to site) is an important factor for maintaining the project's schedule.

Therefore, three access options are moving forward for further study:

- Lillooet Pioneer Road 40 (Road 40) for moving workers, equipment, and materials,
- Hurley River Forest Service Road (Hurley FSR, year-round use) for moving workers, equipment, and materials; and
- Gun Lake Airstrip (fixed-wing airplane) for moving workers.

Accommodation:

Three sites are being carried forward for further study. They include the Hurley site, the Gold Bridge town site, and the Quarry-Adjacent site (see map in the **report highlights**).

Why does BC Hydro often opt for worker camps instead of integrating workers into local communities? “Worker camps are necessary for managing transient workforces. They help avoid overloading local services, ensure safety, and maintain project efficiency without straining nearby communities.”

As the study progresses over the next 18 months, Carmen’s leadership will be instrumental in guiding consultations with the St’át’imc Nation and exploring the feasibility of accommodation options in the area. Stakeholder and public engagement will also play a key role in shaping the project.

With Carmen’s experience and commitment to both operational needs and community considerations, we’re confident the study will yield valuable insights and help us make informed decisions for the project and surrounding communities.

We’d like to thank everyone who participated in the both the Bridge River and La Joie studies—including St’át’imc Nation, local stakeholders, and the public. Your input helped shape our understanding of the region and informed the study’s recommendations. We appreciate your time and look forward to continued collaboration.

For more information on the study, or project visit: bchydro.com/bridgeriver



Carmen Brooks, Project Manager overseeing the feasibility phase of the Bridge River Access & Accommodation Study.

Bridge River Capital Projects: Workforce Update

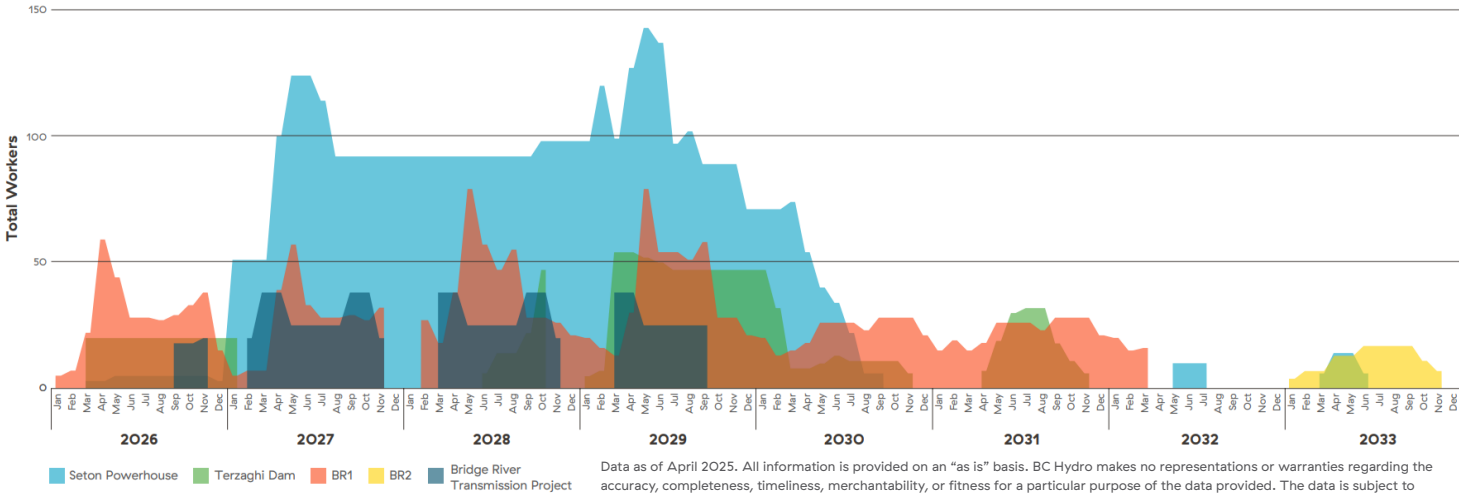
We update our long-term workforce forecasts each year, as numbers may shift depending on project progress.

- Summer 2024: Last summer, we averaged about 50 workers in the area.
- Looking ahead: We expect to maintain around 50 workers through the rest of the year, with most work concluding by mid-November.
- Accommodations: Workers are currently staying at existing facilities in Tsal’alh/Seton Portage. No additional worker accommodations are anticipated through the end of 2025.
- 2026 and beyond: Workforce numbers are expected to grow as new project phases begin.

Bridge River Area Worker Forecast, 2026–2033

Data Date: 02 April 2025

Cumulative: Seton Powerhouse, Terzaghi Dam, Bridge River Powerhouses (BR1/BR2), Bridge River Transmission Project



Data as of April 2025. All information is provided on an “as is” basis. BC Hydro makes no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, merchantability, or fitness for a particular purpose of the data provided. The data is subject to periodic updates; therefore, this graph may be outdated or contain inaccuracies and should be used for presentation purposes only.

Note: Workforce numbers for Seton Powerhouse shown above include both the Bypass and Unit Upgrade Projects. Figures for the La Joie Improvement Project are not included in the graph. For the most up-to-date information on La Joie, please refer to the [La Joie Access and Accommodation Study Report Highlights](#).

For more information on Bridge River projects visit bchydro.com/bridgeriver

If you have questions, please contact us at projects@bchydro.com or 604 623 4472 or toll-free at 1 866 647 3334.

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