



BILLING CODE 6717-01-P

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

### **Federal Energy Regulatory Commission**

**[Project No. 15249-002]**

### **Lewis Ridge Pumped Storage, LLC; Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Lewis Ridge Pumped Storage Project, Schedule for Environmental Review, and Request for Comments**

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare a draft and final environmental impact statement (EIS) to evaluate potential environmental impacts of the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed Lewis Ridge Pumped Storage Project (Lewis Ridge Project; FERC No. 15249), located near the towns of Blackmont, Tejay, Balkan, and Callaway in Bell County, Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> The Commission will use the EIS in its decision-making process in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The schedule for preparing the EIS is discussed in the *Schedule for Environmental Review* section of this notice.

As part of the NEPA review process, the Commission takes into account

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<sup>1</sup> For tracking purposes under the National Environmental Policy Act, the unique identification number for documents relating to this environmental review is EISX-019-20-000-1769690003.

concerns the public may have about proposals and the environmental impacts that could result whenever it considers the issuance of a license. This gathering of public input is referred to as “scoping.” On October 24, 2025, Commission staff issued a notice of scoping period requesting comments on environmental issues for the proposed project, initiating the scoping process for the project.

In accordance with the Commission’s regulations, on February 2, 2026, Commission staff issued a notice that the project was ready for environmental analysis and soliciting comments, recommendations, terms and conditions, and prescriptions (REA Notice). The comment period for the REA Notice closed on April 3, 2026. Based on the information in the record, including comments filed during scoping and in response to the REA Notice, staff has determined that licensing the project may constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, staff will prepare a draft and final EIS for the proposed Lewis Ridge Project, which will address the concerns raised during prior comment periods and comments received in response to this notice.

By this notice, the Commission requests any additional comments on the scope of issues to address in the EIS, including comments on potential alternatives and impacts, and any relevant information, studies, or analyses of any kind concerning impacts affecting the quality of the human environment. If you previously submitted comments and recommendations to the Commission, you do

not need to file those comments and recommendations again. To ensure that your comments are timely and properly recorded, please submit your comments so that the Commission receives them in Washington, DC on or before 5:00 pm Eastern Time on **June 8, 2026**.

### **Public Participation**

There are three methods you can use to submit your comments to the Commission. The Commission encourages electronic filing of comments and has staff available to assist you at (866) 208-3676, or [FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov). Please carefully follow these instructions so that your comments are properly recorded.

- (1) You can file your comments electronically using the eComment feature, which is located on the Commission's website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) under the link to FERC Online. Using eComment is an easy method for submitting brief, text-only comments on a project;
- (2) You can file your comments electronically by using the eFiling feature, which is located on the Commission's website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) under the link to FERC Online. With eFiling, you

can provide comments in a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on “eRegister.” You will be asked to select the type of filing you are making; a comment on a particular project is considered a “Comment on a Filing”; or

- (3) You can file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the Commission. Be sure to reference the project docket number **(P-15249-002)** on your letter. Submissions sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. Submissions sent via any other carrier must be addressed to: Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 12225 Wilkins Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

Additionally, the Commission offers a free service called eSubscription.

This service provides automatic notification of filings made to subscribed project dockets, document summaries, and direct links to the documents. Go to <https://www.ferc.gov/ferc-online/overview> to register for eSubscription.

For public inquiries and assistance with making filings such as interventions, comments, or requests for rehearing, contact the Office of Public Participation at (202) 502-6595, or [OPP@ferc.gov](mailto:OPP@ferc.gov).

### **Summary of the Proposed Lewis Ridge Project**

On June 13, 2025, Lewis Ridge Pumped Storage, LLC (Lewis Ridge LLC), filed an application for an original major license to construct and operate the 308-megawatt (MW) Lewis Ridge Project. The proposed project boundary would enclose about 148 acres of privately owned land, primarily owned by Asher Land and Mineral, LLLP, which it used previously for surface and underground coal mining. About 16 additional parcels of privately owned property would be included in the project boundary, primarily along the transmission line and water intake conduit extending from the Cumberland River to the lower reservoir. These lands are identified in Exhibit G of the application (Project Boundary Drawing).

### **Proposed Project Facilities**

The proposed Lewis Ridge Project would consist of a 48.2-acre upper reservoir created by an 8,241-foot-long, 50-foot-high rock earth-fill dam with an integrated emergency overflow spillway passing flows to the Pound Mill Branch and into Puckett Creek. The upper reservoir would have an active storage of about 2,602 acre-feet between a normal maximum elevation of 2,150 feet and a normal

minimum elevation of 2,076 feet.<sup>2</sup> An intake in the upper reservoir would pass flows to a 3,134-foot-long, 16-foot-diameter aboveground penstock. The penstock would connect to a powerhouse located 267 feet below ground, containing two 154-MW reversible pump-turbines with a total rated capacity of 308 MW. Flows from the powerhouse would pass through two 249-foot-long, 12-foot-diameter draft tubes to a 110-foot-long water intake located at the lower reservoir. The 51.6-acre lower reservoir would be created by a 1,120-foot-long, 138-foot-high earth-fill dam and have an integrated emergency overflow spillway passing flows to the Cumberland River. The lower reservoir would have a gross storage of 3,486 acre-feet and active storage of about 2,602 acre-feet between a normal maximum elevation of 1,134 feet and a normal minimum elevation of 1,034 feet.

A permanent intake would be located on the Cumberland River to provide initial fill flows and maintenance flows. The intake would consist of six screened inlets which connect to a removable/mobile pumping station. Flows from the pumping station would pass through three parallel 4,724-foot-long, 24-inch-diameter buried pipelines which would direct flows to a stilling basin at the lower reservoir.

Lewis Ridge LLC would develop about 7.1 miles of permanent roads for project access and maintenance, and 4 miles of temporary roads for construction.

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<sup>2</sup> Elevations are based on the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD 88).

Lewis Ridge LLC would use two disposal sites to deposit excess spoil material (excavated soil and rocks). After completing construction, these sites would be seeded and revegetated.

The project would include a 2.5-mile-long, 161-kilovolt overhead transmission line and two switching stations, connecting the project powerhouse to the grid at the existing Pineville-Harlan #1 transmission line. Under normal operation, the project would have the capacity to produce about 717,000 megawatt hours (MWh) of peak energy annually.

### **Project Operation**

The Lewis Ridge Project would use flows from the Cumberland River and Tom Fork River for the initial fill and periodic recharge of the reservoirs. The project would require about 2,808 acre-feet of water for the initial fill and 149 acre-feet annually to replace water that would be lost to evaporation and seepage. All flows in the Tom Fork River above 2.8 cubic feet per second (cfs) would be available for maintenance flows and initial fill. About 10% of the mean monthly flow in the Cumberland River would be used for initial fill and to supplement Tom Fork River flows for maintenance when needed.

The lower reservoir would inundate part of the 1.8-mile-long Tom Fork River. The lower reservoir dam would include a low-level outlet, which would be used for emergency releases, as well as providing approximately 2.8 cfs (the

estimated mean annual flow) to the lower section of the Tom Fork River.

The proposed project would pump water from the lower reservoir to the upper reservoir during periods of low electrical demand (i.e., off-peak energy) and generate energy by passing the water from the upper to the lower reservoir through the generating units during periods of high electrical demand (i.e., peak energy). Water surface elevations in the upper reservoir would fluctuate about 74 feet under normal operation. The water surface elevation in the lower reservoir would fluctuate 100 feet. The project would produce 266 MW of energy for an 8-hour generation cycle and take 8.8 hours to return water from the lower reservoir to the upper reservoir. The return cycle would require 340 MW of power.

### **Applicant's Proposed Measures**

Under an original license, in addition to constructing, operating, and maintaining the project as described above, Lewis Ridge LLC would implement the following measures: (1) additional geo-technical analyses; (2) an erosion and sediment control plan; (3) a water quality monitoring plan; (4) a stormwater pollution prevention plan; (5) a hazardous substances spill prevention and cleanup plan; (6) a groundwater protection plan; (7) fish exclusion measures; (8) a freshwater mussel relocation program; (9) a wildlife management plan; (10) a vegetation management plan; and (11) a historic properties management plan.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a new source of

hydroelectric power, primarily during on-peak periods, and provide ancillary services to the electrical grid. Therefore, under the provisions of the Federal Power Act (FPA), the Commission must decide whether to issue a license to Lewis Ridge LLC for the project and what conditions should be placed on any license issued.

### **The NEPA Process and the EIS**

The draft and final EIS issued by the Commission will discuss impacts that could occur from constructing and operating the proposed project under the following relevant general resource areas:

- geology and soil resources;
- water and aquatic resources;
- terrestrial resources;
- threatened and endangered species;
- recreation, land use, and aesthetic resources;
- cultural resources;
- socioeconomic resources, noise and vibration, air quality; and
- developmental resources.

Some of the potential effects include: (1) erosion and sedimentation; (2) the timing and magnitude of water withdrawals from the Cumberland River and Tom Fork River for initial fill and periodic recharge on water quality and aquatic habitat, including associated effects on aquatic organisms, threatened and endangered species, and riparian habitat; (3) the spread of non-native, invasive aquatic and terrestrial species on native species; (4) disturbance of vegetation and suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species, including federally listed species; (5) altered land use and aesthetics; (6) public safety resulting from potential project-related water releases; (7) effects on cultural resources; and (8) changes to local economics, noise/vibrations, and air quality during project construction and operation.

Commission staff will also make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas. Your comments will help Commission staff focus its analysis on issues that may have a significant effect on the human environment.

On June 26, 2025, Commission staff issued a notice of filing of an application for an original license for the project, which invited agencies wishing to cooperate in the preparation of the environmental document. No agencies filed requests for cooperating agency status.

The draft and final EIS will present Commission staff's independent

analysis of the issues. The draft EIS will be issued for public comment and circulated for review by all interested parties. Commission staff will consider all timely comments received during the comment period on the draft EIS and revise the document, as necessary, before issuing the final EIS. The draft and final EIS will be available in electronic format in the public record through eLibrary.<sup>3</sup> If eSubscribed, you will receive an instant email notification when the environmental document is issued.

### **Alternatives Under Consideration**

As part of our review in the EIS, the Commission will consider a range of reasonable alternatives that are technically and economically feasible and meet the purpose and need for the proposed action. Alternatives that do not meet these requirements will be summarized and dismissed from further consideration in the EIS document. In addition to the proposed action, staff will consider a no-action alternative. We are also considering an alternative to the proposed action that potentially meets the above criteria: the applicant's proposed action with staff modifications, including any mandatory conditions (i.e., the staff alternative with mandatory conditions).

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<sup>3</sup> For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the *Additional Information* section of this notice this notice.

With this notice, we ask commenters to identify other potentially reasonable alternatives for consideration. The alternatives considered may be expanded based on the comments received, provided they meet the criteria described above.

### **Schedule for Environmental Review**

This Notice of Intent identifies Commission staff's planned schedule for completion of the final EIS for the project, which is based on an issuance of a draft EIS in November 2026, opening a 45-day public comment period. All comments filed will be reviewed by staff and considered in the Commission's final decision on the proceeding.

Issuance of Notice of Availability of the final EIS

July 16, 2027

If a schedule change becomes necessary, an additional notice will be provided so that the relevant agencies and interested stakeholders are kept informed of the project's progress.

### **Permits and Authorizations**

The table below lists the anticipated permits and authorizations for the project required under federal law. This list may not be all-inclusive and does not

preclude any permit or authorization if it is not listed here. Agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise may formally cooperate in the preparation of the Commission’s EIS and may adopt the EIS to satisfy its NEPA responsibilities related to this project.

Agency	Permit or Authorization
FERC	Non-Federal Hydropower License
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act
Kentucky Heritage Council	Consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection, Division of Water	Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification

**Additional Information**

Additional information about the project is available on the FERC website at [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov), using the eLibrary link. Click on the eLibrary link, then click on “General Search” and enter the Docket No. P-15249 in the “Docket Number” field. Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at [FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov](mailto:FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov), (866) 208-3676 (toll free), or (202) 502-8659 (TTY).

Any questions regarding this notice may be directed to Sarah Salazar, the FERC licensing coordinator for the Lewis Ridge Project, at (202) 502-6863 or [Sarah.Salazar@ferc.gov](mailto:Sarah.Salazar@ferc.gov).

(Authority: 18 CFR 2.1.)

Dated: May 7, 2026.

**Debbie-Anne A. Reese,**

*Secretary.*

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