SCHILLER STATION FINAL NPDES PERMIT

WHAT IS EPA DOING 4/6/2018?

Region 1 EPA is issuing a Final National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for Schiller Station power plant. Schiller Station is a 163 MW power plant located on the Piscataqua River in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. EPA issued a Draft Permit for this facility in 2015 and received extensive comments. After consideration of those comments and consultation with New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and the National Marine Fisheries Service, EPA is now issuing the Final Permit.

WHAT TYPE OF FUEL DOES SCHILLER BURN?

The Station operates two coal-fired generating units (designated as Units 4 and 6), one wood burning unit (Unit 5), and an oil-fired combustion turbine peaking unit.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN THINGS THAT THE PERMIT WILL ALLOW THE POWER PLANT TO DO?

Key permitting issues involve the facility's withdrawal of up to 125.8 million gallons per day (MGD) of water from the river for cooling and its discharges of heat (in its non-contact cooling water), stormwater, and wastewater treatment plant effluent.

HOW MUCH WILL THIS PERMIT COST FOR THE OWNER?

The most expensive change will be a requirement to install and operate new, state-of-the-art, self-cleaning screens, at an estimated cost of $7 million, to protect fish and aquatic life that are currently being killed or injured by the withdrawal of river water for cooling at the power plant.

WHO OWNED THIS POWER PLANT? DIDN'T IT RECENTLY CHANGE HANDS?

In accordance with recent New Hampshire law, Schiller's previous owner, Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH), had to divest itself of its electrical generating units. In October 2017, PSNH agreed to sell its fossil fuel generating assets, including Schiller Station, to Granite Shore Power LLC. The sale closed on January 10, 2018. Schiller Station is now owned and operated by GSP Schiller LLC, a subsidiary of Granite Shore Power LLC.

WHAT ARE THE FUTURE PLANS FOR SCHILLER STATION?

EPA understands that, consistent with New Hampshire law, the terms the recent sale require Granite Shore Power to operate Schiller Station for at least 18 months following the transfer of ownership. Granite Shore Power can speak to long-term plans for Schiller Station beyond that timeframe.

WHO HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE DRAFT PERMIT FOR SCHILLER STATION?

Region 1 issued the Draft Permit in September 2015 and received comments from the permittee (then PSNH), the Sierra Club, and the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF).

(Sierra Club twice sued EPA (in 2013 and 2016) alleging unreasonable delay in reissuing the Schiller Station NPDES permit. The court dismissed both cases, while noting it expected EPA to work diligently to reissue the permit.)

AFTER CONSIDERING THE COMMENTS FROM PSNH, THE SIERRA CLUB AND CLF, WHAT DID EPA INCLUDE IN THE FINAL PERMIT TO MINIMIZE THE LOSS OF AQUATIC LIFE DUE TO THE PLANT'S WITHDRAWAL OF WATER FROM THE PISCATAQUA RIVER?

The Final Permit retains fine-mesh wedgewire screens as the BTA, grants PSNH's request for an emergency intake to go with the screen system, lengthens the compliance schedule, and eliminates a proposed proposed power plant outage requirement.

WHAT DOES THE FINAL PERMIT REQUIRE REGARDING THE DISCHARGE OF HEAT INTO THE PISCATAQUA RIVER?

The Draft Permit proposed renewal of the existing permit's thermal discharge limits based on a CWA § 316(a) variance from water-quality and technology-based temperature limits. PSNH agreed with this proposal but disagreed with EPA's denial of the company's request for increased temperature limits; Sierra Club opposed renewal of the variance and argued that technology-based and water quality-based thermal limits are required. The Final Permit retains the current permit's temperature limits based on renewal of the existing § 316(a) variance and grants PSNH's request for one additional hour daily for a temporary, maintenance-related 5°F rise in temperature.

DOES THIS PERMIT INCLUDE STORMWATER REQUIREMENTS LIKE THE MS4 PERMIT?

All stormwater outfalls and monitoring requirements have been removed from the Final Permit. All such discharges must be covered under another permit, the Multi-Sector General Permit (the MSGP), prior to the effective date of the new NPDES permit. EPA will explore possible monitoring requirements for stormwater pollutants of concern (e.g., nitrogen and PAHs) either through the MSGP or through a monitoring request pursuant to section 308 of the CWA.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The interested parties that commented on the draft permit (the permittee, Sierra Club and CLF) will have up to 30 days to decide if they wish to appeal the permit and, if so, to file an appeal with EPA's Environmental Appeals Board in Washington D.C. If there is no appeal, the permit will go into effect in about two months, triggering a multi-year compliance schedule for those permit requirements that require new technologies.