

January 16, 2026

Ms. Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Esq.
Secretary Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20426



Via online submission to: <http://www.ferc.gov>

Subject: Further Comments on June 17, 2025 Generator Trip Event at McKay Station, Ripogenus Project (FERC No. P-2572)

Dear Secretary Reese:

On behalf of its six chapters and more than 1,700 members, Maine Council of Trout Unlimited (TU) seeks the assistance of the Commission with respect to the monitoring plan for flows downstream of McKay Station. The current plan does not meet the intent of Article 403 of the current license and the Great Northern Paper, Inc. Water Management Plan for FERC Project No. 2572 – Ripogenus (Accession No. 19970429-0307).

Background. At approximately 2:24 p.m. on June 17, 2025, a generator trip at McKay Station caused river flows to fall below the minimum outage flow of 400 cubic feet per second (cfs) required under Article 402 of the Ripogenus Project license. Brookfield reported that “a low hourly flow of 350 cfs was recorded during this excursion” as the result of a transmission line cross-arm failure while one generating unit was out of service for maintenance (Accession No. 20250626-5131; Brookfield Minimum Outage Flow Excursion Report, June 26, 2025, pp. 1–2). The duration of the event was reported as 1 hour, 41 minutes. FERC Compliance requested additional information that Brookfield provided, with a spreadsheet generally providing round number estimates for the flows that followed the event (Accession No. 20250909-5113, p. 6); Brookfield response to FERC Additional Information Request Regarding June 17, 2025, Deviation from Article 402 Required Discharges).

Observed Impacts. Brookfield’s report acknowledges that impacts to aquatic life likely occurred during this event (Brookfield, June 26, 2025; Accession No. 20250626-5131, p. 2). TU documented stranded and dead aquatic life through photographs and video submitted to the Commission later in June 2025 (TU, Additional Information Requests Comments, June 30, 2025; Accession No. 20250630-5044, pp. 3–6). This is consistent with what TU teams observed during the October 5, 2022 stranding study, which found that abrupt flow reductions below McKay Station result in significant fish stranding and mortality, particularly among young-of-year salmonids (Accession No. 20220923-5086; Maine TU Council Stranding Study Observations, Oct. 19, 2022;). Additionally, generator trip events interrupt both whitewater and fishing activities, and strand rafts and drift boats until flows are restored.

Context. This is not a new problem. Generator trip events at McKay Station have been occurring for years, on average about once per year by Brookfield’s own admission (Accession No. 20250909-5113). After the July 7, 2023 trip event and resulting fish kills, FERC requested Brookfield “consult with the FWS, Maine DIFW, Maine DEP, and Maine LURC to identify measures aimed at reducing the instances of fish and macroinvertebrate strandings downstream of McKay Station during down ramping events,

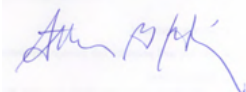
such as unit outages, until the current relicensing process is concluded.” (Accession No. 20230822-3052). Brookfield’s January 2024 proposal did little more than preserve the status quo, a point TU made in its January 25, 2024 comments (Accession No. 20240125-5091); TU Response to Ripogenus Project Interim Plan, Jan. 25, 2024. The June 17, 2025 event shows that the underlying problem remains unresolved.

Need for Action. Although Brookfield’s Draft Operations & Compliance Monitoring Plan introduces new procedural reporting requirements, the underlying monitoring framework remains unchanged and fully controlled by the licensee, relying on internal SCADA (**Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition**) systems and Brookfield-maintained public postings without any independent, continuous in-river verification (Accession No. 20250728-5100, Appendix B at pp. 14–17). The accompanying Draft Low Inflow Protocol explicitly acknowledges that it is “largely based” on historic operational consultations under the 1996 licenses and preserves Brookfield’s operational flexibility without establishing objective, enforceable flow thresholds or independent measurement standards (Accession No. 20250728-5100, Attachment 1 at pp. 1–2; pp. 6–7). For this reason, Maine Trout Unlimited respectfully submits that installation of an independent USGS flow/temperature gage in the Telos Bridge reach is essential to provide objective compliance verification, real-time transparency, and meaningful protection of recreation and aquatic resources until the new license is approved and implemented. This failure of independent verification directly undermines the enforceability of Articles 402 and 403 of the current license. More than six months have now passed since the June 17, 2025 event, yet nothing has changed on the ground. Each generator trip continues to place the West Branch fishery at risk, including landlocked Atlantic salmon — Maine’s state fish — and the aquatic community they depend on.

Requested Next Steps. At a minimum, TU asks that Brookfield be required to install, at its expense, a USGS-standard flow/temperature gage in the Telos Bridge area so that future events can be evaluated using accurate, independent data. Brookfield effectively acknowledges this need by proposing the installation of a downstream gage in its Final License Application (Accession No. 20240930-5071, P-2572 Final License Application, Vol. I, Schedule A, Water Resources Section), but will do nothing to shed light on conditions in the reach most affected by these events in the near term. In the absence of a USGS flow/temperature gage, FERC should direct the continuous release of 400 cfs through a deep gate to buffer and mitigate the effects of future trip events, and direct Brookfield to return a dam keeper to Ripogenus Dam to reduce outage duration as per our prior request (Accession No. 20250630-5044, p. 3; Additional Information Requests (AIRs) Regarding Relicensing of the Ripogenus Project (P-2572) and the Penobscot Mills Project (P-2458)).

Conclusion. With the relicensings behind schedule and the project continuing to operate under the existing license, improved oversight and better information are essential if the Commission is to meet its statutory responsibility to protect the river and its fishery while this process plays out.

Very respectfully,



Stephen G. Heinz
Maine TU Council FERC Coordinator

Document Content(s)

Maine TU Council Letter to FERC Compliance.pdf1