



## News Release

### Effort underway to relicense Baker River hydroelectric project

Concrete, Wash. (March 27, 2000) -- -- During two public meetings scheduled for March 30, 2000, Puget Sound Energy will ask the public, local jurisdictions and resource agencies to consider participating in an alternative process designed to promote early involvement and collaboration as the utility begins a four-year effort to relicense the Baker River Hydroelectric Project.

PSE must file with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) by 2004 an application for a new license to operate the hydroelectric project. A license issued in 1956 expires on May 1, 2006.

"Traditionally, the process for licensing a project such as ours does not thoroughly involve interested agencies and the public until well into the licensing effort," Connie Freeland, Puget Sound Energy's Baker River Project Relicensing Manager, said. "However, several years ago FERC revised its procedures to allow for an alternative process that encourages license applicants and interested parties to work together from the beginning."

Among the advantages of the "alternative licensing process," Freeland cites the early identification of issues and concerns; better opportunity for input from local stakeholders; possible early agreement on resource protection and enhancement measures; and more expedient FERC review and acceptance of the license application.

"We're holding informational meetings so that agencies and the public can learn about project features as they exist now and can hear more about the benefits of collaboration by reviewing both the traditional and alternative steps for filing a license application," Freeland said.

Among those invited to attend the meetings are agencies, tribes, organizations and individuals interested in a variety of issues including fisheries, wildlife resources, cultural and historical resources, water resources, and recreation.

Located in Whatcom and Skagit Counties, the project is composed of two dams and powerhouses on the Baker River near Concrete. The Lower Baker facility began operating in 1925, while Upper Baker was completed in 1959.

The meetings will be held on March 30, 2000. They will be the same in content and held at the following locations:

10 a.m. to 12 p.m.	<b>Or</b>	6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Cottontree Inn		Concrete High School Commons Room
2401 Riverside Dr.		7830 Superior Ave.
Mount Vernon, WA		Concrete, WA
Sign-in begins at 9:30 a.m.		Sign-in begins at 6 p.m.

Media Contact: 1-888-831-7250