

February 20th, 2020

Regional Community Liaison Committee
Site C Clean Energy Project

Sent via email

RE: Clayhurst/Blackfoot Boat Launch Background and Communications Summary

Dear RCLC members,

This letter is in response to the RCLC's request for information regarding the construction of a boat launch at Clayhurst/Blackfoot and specifically to provide the chronology of facts that led to the decision by the Comptroller of Water Rights (CWR) to cancel the boat launch project at Clayhurst/Blackfoot.

On August 9, 2007, under the Water Act Peace Order issued by the CWR, BC Hydro was required to:

"...submit, for approval, terms of reference for a study to improve boat ramp access to the river at Lynx Creek, Halfway River, Peace Island Park and Clayhurst/Blackfoot Regional Park."

If feasible, the CWR would provide BC Hydro a separate direction for leave to commence construction. Projects undertaken under this clause of the Peace Order are funded by the CWR, and therefore require the CWR approval prior to expenditures.

BC Hydro commissioned a study by Moffatt & Nichol to assess the old (now removed) Blackfoot boat ramp, immediately downstream of the Clayhurst Bridge on the south bank of the river at Blackfoot Regional Park. The report initially determined that a new boat launch facility was required due to ongoing significant erosion of the existing boat launch.

However, as the design process progressed it was determined that the area was subject to three key inhibiting factors: the parking area was determined to be at risk of regular flooding, the relative forecast usage was low and the cost of building a boat ramp was prohibitive. As such, the CWR determined that a boat ramp was not feasible at this location and cancelled the project.

As further background, on April 9th, 2013, Klohn Crippen Berger, BC Hydro and three local boat users including a member of the Peace Country River Rats, a local non-profit boat user organization, visited the site location of the proposed Blackfoot Park Boat ramp and determined it floods regularly. Based on this site visit, the engineers determined that locating the ramp and parking lot within a flood plain where considerable siltation occurs was not prudent. As well, the engineers concluded that siting the parking lot in another location within the park boundaries away from the ramp location was not user-friendly nor fully functional.

BC Hydro recommended cancelling the Clayhurst/Blackfoot boat launch in a letter to the CWR dated August 19, 2013. It was concluded that the construction of a boat ramp within Blackfoot Park was not feasible for the following reasons:

- flooding risks;
- high complexity and high cost of construction of a new boat ramp in the Peace River based on recent experience at Peace Island Park (opened on March 31, 2013 approximately 40km upstream); and
- recreational user surveys indicating markedly less boat ramp use for Blackfoot than forecast for the ramp at Peace Island Park.

The CWR approved the cancellation of the Blackfoot Park boat ramp projects in a letter to BC Hydro dated October 10, 2013.

Subsequently, there have been numerous letters and discussions confirming that BC Hydro no longer has obligations for a boat ramp at Blackfoot Park. Below is an outline of some of the key letters and discussions that have occurred over time:

- June 2014 BC Hydro meeting with directors and staff from the Peace River Regional District (PRRD): BC Hydro advised that the plan to construct an engineered boat launch at Blackfoot Park had been discontinued.
- October 29, 2014 letter to BC Hydro from PRRD: PRRD requested that BC Hydro consider building a boat ramp at a location outside of the Blackfoot Park;
- October 30, 2014 BC Hydro meeting with the PR Regional Parks Committee: to discuss the alternate location and possible in-kind support provided to PRRD if they undertook to build the ramp at this alternate location.
- July 23, 2015 letter to CWR from PRRD: : PRRD requested that the CWR authorize BC Hydro to conduct a feasibility study using existing CWR funds to examine an alternative location for a boat launch on the Peace River on the west side of the Clayhurst Bridge.
- August 18, 2015 letter to PRRD from CWR: the CWR replied and advised the PRRD that the CWR was not required to request further feasibility work from BC Hydro.
- On June 23, 2016 the CWR again wrote the PRRD to reconfirm that it would not be authorizing further works at Blackfoot Park. The CWR noted that BC Hydro has a current requirement to build three new boat launch/day use sites on the new Site C reservoir. The CWR also confirmed the reasons for their decision were:
 - the new high-capacity boat launch at Peace Island Park;
 - the higher cost for Peace Island Park boat ramp that was greater than the cost estimate considered by the original Peace Consultative Committee; and
 - the low use forecasted for a Blackfoot/Clayhurst boat launch in contrast to Peace Island Park (attached).
- On March 3, 2017 the PRRD wrote BC Hydro requesting further clarification on the cancellation of the Blackfoot/Clayhurst boat and on April 19, 2017, BC Hydro had a conference call with the PRRD to respond to their March 3, 2017 letter.
- On December 14, 2017 MLA Mike Bernier wrote to the PRRD with an explanation that included details that BC Hydro provided to the PRRD in our April conference call:
 1. That the sites within Blackfoot Regional Park were deemed not technically feasible as they were within the floodplain;
 2. The usage studies undertaken for Site C indicated that Taylor would have higher use;

3. Given the costs incurred to upgrade Taylor (building a ramp in the challenging, fast-flowing river), that the expected cost per use at a Blackfoot Regional Park site would be even higher.
- Additionally, this topic has been discussed on numerous occasions at the Peace Williston Advisory Committee (PWAC) meetings.

We are hopeful that the provision of this historic chronology of decisions relating to the proposed Clayhurst / Blackfoot boat ramp will provide the RCLC members clarity regarding how the matter came to conclusion.

BC Hydro is currently focusing on designing and implementing the three new boat launches to be constructed as part of the Site C project on the future reservoir and would be happy to provide updates on the status of these boat launches at future meetings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a trailing line, positioned above a horizontal line.

Shanna Mason
Director Regulatory, Environmental, Social, Properties and Communication Programs
Site C Clean Energy Project