

Bryson Hydroelectric Project (FERC # 2601)

Report on High Water Availability for Recreation and Recreation Opportunity Studies

The Bryson Project is located in a mostly rural area of Swain County, North Carolina, approximately 5 miles east of Bryson City near the communities of Whittier, Ela and the Cherokee Indian Reservation. The dam crosses the Oconoluftee River approximately 0.5 mile upstream of its confluence with the Tuckasegee River. The Oconoluftee River arises in the Great Smokey Mountains National Park and is a major tributary of the Tuckasegee River. Average annual runoff at Birdtown (about four miles above the Project) is about 512 cfs with significant seasonal variations. Information about river flows at Birdtown is available through the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) phone messaging system for the public interested in downstream recreation. The TVA numbers are 800 238 2264 and 800 438 2265 (for hearing impaired). Real time flow information can be obtained from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) gauge near Birdtown (gauge number 03512000) on the USGS website.

The Bryson Project does not significantly affect flow levels in the Oconoluftee River since it is a hydroelectric project with limited storage. Water either flows through the generator(s) and back into the riverbed below the 36-foot high dam or it runs over the dam or both. Since the Project has minimal effects on either river flows or reservoir levels, it also has no impact on angling and paddling recreational opportunities on the reservoir and downstream of the Project whether at low or high stream flows. Further information will be available from the Bryson Small Plant Operation Plan currently being developed as part of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing of the Bryson Project.

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