

Keeyask Generation Project

Reservoir Impoundment

Message from Dave Bowen, Keeyask Project Director

Manitoba Hydro recognizes and values that Cree culture, spirituality and wellbeing is grounded in respecting the relationship and balance between people, land and water, and all other living things, and that impoundment and its impacts cannot be separated from the larger environment.

We acknowledge that there will be environmental and cultural loss to our partner First Nation communities as a result of the required changes to the land. We will continue to work with the communities to understand and share knowledge of project effects from both Indigenous and technical science perspectives.

Reservoir impoundment is planned to start late August 2020 and is expected to last five to seven days.

Impoundment is required to provide the height and flow of water needed to generate the planned amount of electricity from each turbine unit. During impoundment, the largest change will occur on Gull Lake where levels will be raised about 2.5 metres (8.2 feet), with increases of up to 0.5 metres or 1.6 feet each day to create the planned reservoir. Increases will be smaller at locations further upstream of Gull Lake with **no increases expected on Clark Lake or Split Lake.**

Manitoba Hydro, as the Project Manager, has provincial and federal approval to start impoundment after the bird nesting season, which ends August 25th. There will be increased aerial and land monitoring activities during this time by Manitoba Hydro and partner First Nations monitoring staff.

Monitoring work will be conducted with additional safety and health precautions that follow the current pandemic guidelines of Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living.

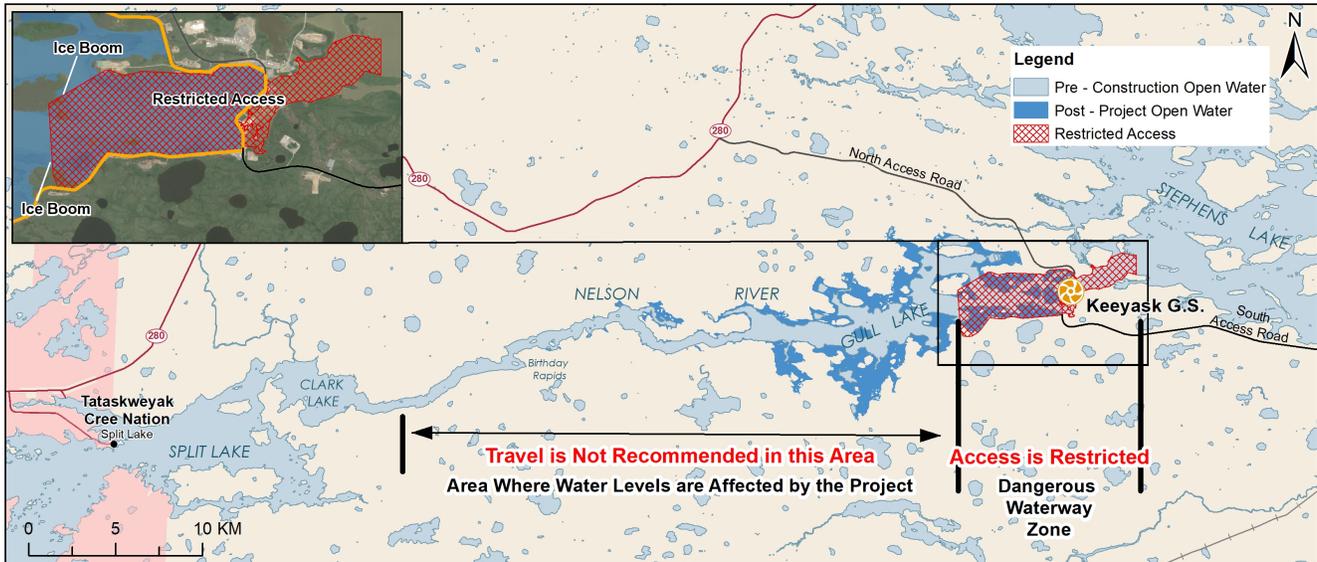
Communities will receive daily updates during impoundment on water level and flow conditions, and monitoring activities. Updates will be emailed and can be printed for distribution or shared on social media. They are also available on Keeyask.com.

STAY SAFE: Due to rapidly changing conditions, avoid all travel on the Nelson River from Clark Lake outlet to the Keeyask site during and immediately after impoundment.

Personal equipment should be removed from shorelines in the area affected by impoundment. Manitoba Hydro will have its local boat patrols in the area for further information.

What is reservoir impoundment?

Reservoir impoundment is the process of holding back water at the Keeyask Generating Station to raise upstream water levels. Currently water levels are approx. 156.5 metres or 513.5 feet on Gull Lake. They will be raised to a maximum of 159 metres or 521.7 feet to operate the generating station. This will create the planned reservoir, flooding 45 square kilometres (28 square miles) of land upstream. Water levels will rise on the Nelson River between the Keeyask Generating Station to about three kilometers downstream of Clark Lake.



Note: Travel is not recommended in the area shown above during and immediately after impoundment.

What work was completed leading up to impoundment?

Manitoba Hydro received provincial and federal agreement to start water-up in late February 2020. Water-up is the process of filling enclosed work areas kept dry during construction. Water levels in these work areas were raised until they closely matched the water level of Gull Lake (approx. 156.5 metres or 513.5 feet) at the Keeyask site. Water-up was completed in April 2020.



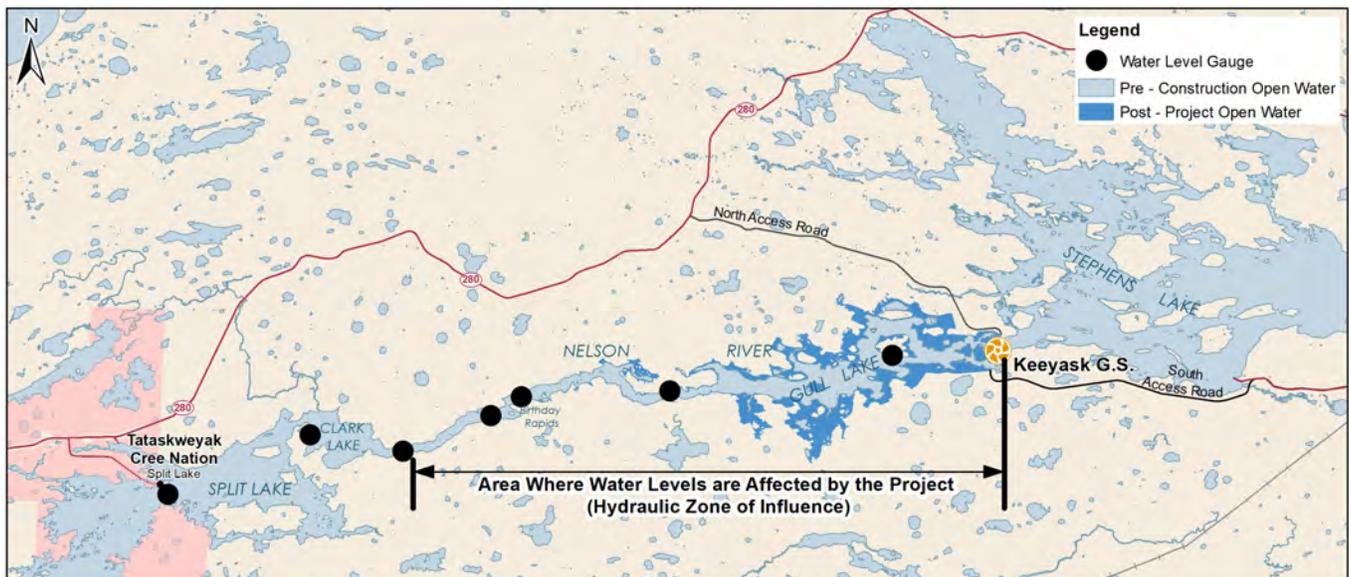
View of powerhouse and spillway (top left corner) after water-up was completed.

Photo taken June 2020

What is being done to ensure impoundment activities do not affect Clark Lake or Split Lake?

Water level information is transmitted hourly from gauges upstream of the Keeyask site and reviewed regularly by Manitoba Hydro staff and partner First Nations monitoring staff. If the monitoring indicates that water level effects are outside of expectations, the impoundment process will pause.

Impoundment can be paused quickly (i.e. within a couple of hours) which will halt the effects of impoundment on upstream water levels.



How will the impacts of reservoir impoundment affect the land?

There will be:

- 45 square kilometres (28 square miles) of newly flooded land, resulting in a loss of inland and shoreline habitat. Birds and animals will be displaced from flooded areas.
- Changes to water levels, flows, and ice formation, and there will be changes to fish habitat in the reservoir area. Over time, new shorelines will begin to form.
- Changes to traditional harvesting areas and travel routes on both water and land, a loss of culturally significant areas, and there is a potential for loss of unknown heritage resources.

A number of mitigation measures to address effects on the land, water and people were developed, and have been or will be put in place after impoundment.

Are the changes to the land, water and animals being acknowledged?

Cultural ceremonies are held at the Keeyask site at key milestones to honour the relationship people have with the land and water, and to acknowledge changes to the environment and surrounding ancestral lands. These ceremonies are led and conducted by Employee Retention and Support Services, a Joint Venture with York Factory First Nation and Fox Lake Cree Nation.

On August, 12, 2020 an Impoundment Ceremony was conducted by Employee Retention and Support Services at the Keeyask site. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only on-site workers were able to attend the ceremony to ensure all site safety pandemic protocols were followed.



Photos taken August 12, 2020

Honouring the Water Element

Water is respected for its life giving, life sustaining, and healing gifts. The Nelson River is a significant part of everyday life for the partner First Nation communities. It is the basic foundation that supplies Cree people - Land, Water and Animals - and has sustained a way of life for centuries. Ceremonial gatherings bring together ancestors, and power animals through prayer and blessings, and offerings to the Water Element, Mother Earth and the River Spirits.

The Keeyask Generation Project is in the Split Lake Resource Management Area, and within the ancestral homeland of the four partner First Nations: Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, York Factory First Nation, and Fox Lake Cree Nation. When completed, it will be a reliable source of renewable energy providing 695 megawatts of power.

If you have questions about the Keeyask impoundment process, please call your KCN Site Representative or e-mail Diana Mager at dmager@hydro.mb.ca

