



SUSITNA-WATANA HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

Meeting Summary
Terrestrial Resources Agency Workshop
2012 Studies and Issues
9 a.m. – Noon, December 8, 2011
Held at AEA Project Offices Conference Room,
411 W 4th Avenue, Suite 1, Anchorage, AK

Purpose of Meeting:

Present and discuss 2012 Study Plans.

Attendees:

AEA	Betsy McGregor, Env. Manager
AEA	Emily Ford, Public Affairs
AEA	Wayne Dyok, Project Manager
AEA	Doug Ott
Cardno-Entrix	Jim Gill, Assistant to AEA
MWH	Kirby Gilbert
Long View Associates	Steve Padula
Cardno-Entrix	Woody Trihey
Cardno-Entrix	Lynn Noel
Cardno-Entrix	Steve Nevares
USFWS	Jennie Spagon
Coalition for Susitna Dam Alternatives	Becky Long
HDR	Nancy Tankersley
ABR, Inc.	Brian Lawhead
Long View / NES	John Morsell
ADF&G	Mark Burch
ADNR, Office of History & Archaeology	Richard VanderHoek
DOWL HKM	Kacy Hillman
Oasis Environmental	Susan Ives
Oasis Environmental	Josh Brekken
CIRI	Dara Glass
ADF&G	Joe Giefer
USEPA	Matthew LaCroix
ABR, Inc.	Terry Schick
Tetra Tech	Bill Fullerton
AEA	Audrey Alstrom
Knikatnu, Inc.	Tom Harris
E-Terra	Lars Geistmann

ADF&G	Ron Benkert
USFWS	Mike Buntjer
DOWL	Jessica Christianson
USBLM, Glennallen	Elijah Waters
USFWS	Betsy McCracken
HDR Alaska	Anne Leggett
Van Ness Feldman	Jonathan Simon
Natural Heritage Institute	Jan Konigsberg
Tetra Tech	Rob Plotnikoff
USDOJ	Michael Baffrey
USBLM, Glennallen	John Jangala
ABR	Bob Burgess (by phone)
3PPI	Sally Morsell (by phone)
FERC	David Turner (by phone)
3PPI	Cheryl Moody (by phone)

Presentations:

- Lynn Noel (Cardno-Entrix): Wildlife Studies
 - Wildlife Habitat Use and Movement
 - Past and Current Big Game and Furbearer Harvest Study
 - Eagle and Raptor Nest Study

- Lynn Noel (Cardno-Entrix): Botanical Studies
 - Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Mapping Study
 - Riparian Study
 - Wetland Mapping

Questions/Discussion Related to Presentations

Cardno-Entrix –Wildlife Studies

- Question about how the study area is defined. The project footprint provides a basic analysis area of direct impacts including the three alternative access corridors, transmission corridor and dam and reservoir areas. Beyond the Project footprint, the study areas will vary with the resource being studied.
- Wayne Dyok, project manager for the Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project indicated that the study area can go as far as Cook Inlet, if warranted. Woody Trihey mentioned the 2012 studies may help determine and define the extent of downstream effects.
- Existing data may not be refined enough to fully assess impacts.
- Need to comply with Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Acts.
- It will be good to avoid raptor disturbance during study periods.
- Important to look for patterns of changes in moose and caribou distribution.

- Questions about when preferred access corridor will be determined. Currently three main routes being studied and carried through to study efforts. The environmental study process will help to define or potentially limit the final proposed corridor.
- Question about where and how the river will be diverted at the dam site during construction – it will be a short diversion tunnel on the north bank.
- Important to consult early with ADF&G Habitat Division on potential stream crossing locations of the proposed access road. The Denali Corridor does not cross any anadromous fish bearing streams, while both the Gold Creek and Chulitna corridors do.
- Question about need for blasting – it is likely there will be some at or near proposed Dam site.
- Question whether an airstrip is part of Project plan. The airstrip is planned and will need to be established early on.
- Question about the access road, if it will be open to the public and if it will be paved. Long term access and road surface have not been determined at this time; there will be no public access during construction.
- Questions about consideration of a railroad spur. It has been eliminated as an alternative based on cost versus benefit.
- For caribou, ADF&G may need to collar more animals to determine distribution, migration patterns, stream crossing sites and assess potential Project impacts. Some animals may be collared with GPS collars to obtain more specific movement data than can be determined from VHF collars.
- Question about predator surveys. There may be adequate existing information on bears. Wolves would be difficult to survey and telemetry would not likely be appropriate because it is a predator control area and the population and movements are very dynamic.

Cardno-Entrix – Botanical Studies

- Question about how much data is available downstream of proposed dam site. This is still being compiled. There is data within the active floodplain from the proposed dam site to the Talkeetna River confluence, approximately 30 discrete locations within the riparian corridor of the Middle and Lower Susitna River reaches, and several isolated sites below the Deshka River.
- It was asked if the permafrost extent been studied, or will be studied? It was studied in the 1980s and there will be additional studies.
- It was mentioned that Talkeetna area has doubled its frost-free period in recent years. However, further discussion brought out a need to be cautionary as the location of the met station is near pavement and subject to effects of increased plane tarmac traffic patterns where planes can idle for long periods of time.
- It is important to collect functional information on wetlands and engage the Corps of Engineers on the methodology. The Corps will be engaged and will be consulted to approve of the functional assessment prior to its use.
- There may be different requirements for surveys on BLM lands.

- Local climate effects of reservoir may be important to consider in impact assessment.
- Mention of the potential need for compensatory mitigation and whether that might be important.

Kirby Gilbert, Sr. Regulatory Specialist, MWH and Steve Nevares, Cardno-Entrix¹

¹ The notes are designed to provide a summary of conversation and the meeting was not recorded. If you feel there is an error or a correction needs to be made, contact Emily Ford at eford@aidea.org.