

**Meeting Summary**  
**Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project Licensing**  
**Terrestrial Resources Initial Issue Identification and Study**  
**Concepts**  
**1:00-3:00 pm; October 25, 2011**  
**CIRI Building – 4th Floor Conference Room**  
**2525 C Street Anchorage, AK**

**Purpose of Meeting:**

- Presentation by MWH on tentative Project footprint/transmission corridors.
- Discuss study Work Group concepts and Integrated Licensing Process (ILP) Planning efforts for studies.
- Initial issues and study concepts identification for Wildlife Species Surveys, Vegetation Mapping, and Wetlands.
- Discussion of possible 2012 studies versus the formal study program to be planned with agencies in 2012 and conducted in 2013 and 2014.

**Attendees:**

AEA	Bryan Carey, Engineering Manager
AEA	Betsy McGregor, Environmental Manager
AEA	Emily Ford, Public Outreach Liaison
CardnoEntrix	Jim Gill
Attorney General's Office	Brian Bjorkquist
MWH	Kirby Gilbert
Long View Associates	Steve Padula
Long View Associates	Randall Filbert
3PPI	Sally Morsell
CardnoEntrix	Woody Trihey
CardnoEntrix	Lynn Noel
CardnoEntrix	Jean Baldrige
CardnoEntrix	Steve Nevares
Ahtna, Inc.	Kathryn Martin
ADF&G	Joe Klein
ADF&G	Todd Rinaldi
ADF&G	Tim Peltier
ADF&G	Jason Mouw
ADF&G	Ed Weiss
ADF&G	Mike Petrula
ADF&G	Joe Giefer
ADG&G	Ron Benkem
USFWS	Mike Buntjer
USFWS	Betsy McCracken
USFWS	Jennifer Spegon
USEPA	Jennifer Curtis

BLM	Tim Sundlov
BLM	Elijah Waters
NPS	Cassie Thomas
ADNR	Jusdi McDonald
ADNR – Office of History & Archaeology	Richard VanderHoek
Alaska Conservation Alliance	Kate McKeown
Senator Joe Thomas Office	Grier Hopkins
Dowl HKM	Kristen Hansen
ABR	Brian Lawhead
URS	Paul Dworian
HDR Alaska	Anne Leggett
NLUR	Pete Bowers
USDA –Rural Development	Eric Marchegiani
URS	Stephen Trimble
Van Ness Feldman	Matt Love

**Presentations:**

- Kirby Gilbert (MWH): Tentative Project Footprint/Transmission Corridors.

**Questions/Discussion Related to MWH Presentation**

MWH addressed the following stakeholder questions and comments regarding the tentative Project footprint/transmission corridors:

- When will maps showing the proposed transmission line corridors and road access routes be available?
  - Maps showing the proposed transmission line corridors and road access routes will be included in the PAD and will likely be posted on the AEA website in the near future.
- Will there be a need for an access road to the east end of the reservoir?
  - Currently there appears to be no need for an access road leading to the east end of the reservoir, although potential recreational needs will be considered when developing a recreation plan for the Project.
- Will the borrow pit on the south side of the dam site be accessible following construction of the Project, and if so, will there be an access road across the dam?
  - Permanent access routes are not fully known, but Project personnel will be able to cross the dam with work vehicles.
- AEA will need to consider soil type and permafrost conditions when planning road alignments.
  - AEA and ADOT have hired geotechnical consultants to evaluate soil conditions. Results of analyses will be presented to stakeholders in the future.
- Where will the Project airstrip be located?
  - The precise location of a future airstrip is not finalized, but we have a tentative location near the dam on the north side of the river. Environmental studies will

help determine locations or layouts for some facilities in order to help minimize environmental impacts.

- How many workers will be housed near the dam site when the Project is under construction?
  - More information regarding the size and scheduling of construction crews will be available in the future and depends on the dam type. The number of people on site would be low in winter and at times would be high during summer. The Project would be operated remotely from Anchorage, so the permanent onsite staff would be much smaller than that envisioned in the 1980s.
- Will material for construction of roads be derived from the area to be inundated by the reservoir?
  - No, the likely scenario would be to develop multiple, small borrow pits along the road corridor to provide construction materials.
- How long will the river be diverted while the dam is being constructed?
  - AEA is still determining what type of dam construction would be used, which would influence the duration of construction and, therefore, the period of diversion. The PAD will provide a description of the type of dam to be built and timeframes associated with construction and river diversion. Construction would be conducted year-round to reduce the duration of diversion.

### **Study Workgroup Concepts and ILP Planning Efforts for Studies**

The AEA team discussed the following study workgroup concepts and ILP planning efforts for studies:

- Work Group structure, function, core membership, and public attendance.
- Resource areas for which Work Groups would likely be formed: Aquatic; Water Quality; Terrestrial; Recreation, Land Use, Aesthetics; and Cultural.
- The need to schedule Work Group meeting dates in a staggered fashion to ensure that core members responsible for multiple resources can attend all necessary meetings.
- Overview of the ILP schedule.
- Posting of materials on the AEA website.
- The need for 2011 Work Group meetings to allow AEA to develop requests for proposals (RFPs) for 2012 field studies.
  - It was agreed that initial meetings would be held the week of December 5, 2011.
- Stakeholders stressed the need for AEA to send meeting materials to Work Group members in advance of meetings, preferably at least two weeks before meetings.

### **Discussion of Initial Issues and Study Concepts Identification for Wildlife Species Surveys, Vegetation Mapping, and Wetlands:**

The AEA team discussed Project-related issues and potential studies and addressed agency staff questions pertaining to Wildlife Species Surveys, Vegetation Mapping, and Wetlands:

- It was noted that ice dynamics should be identified as a specific study need and that work on this subject should begin in 2012.

- Meeting participants asked the following questions and received responses from the AEA team:
  - Would the reservoir bottom near the shoreline be steep or more gently sloped, a factor that would influence habitat suitability for waterfowl?
    - Slopes in the vicinity of the Watana Creek inflow would be relatively gentle, whereas the shoreline around most of the remainder of the reservoir generally would be steep.
  - Would timber growing in the area to be inundated be removed before the reservoir is filled?
    - Timber maybe removed prior to the filling of the reservoir to reduce the potential for impacts associated with the decomposition of submerged organic matter. (The issue of removal vs no removal will be studied).
  - Geology and soils mapping will be important for assessing the potential distribution of bat roosting sites and hibernacula. When will such mapping be conducted?
    - Contractors are available to conduct mapping to supplement, as needed, work done during the 1980s. The rock in the region of the proposed reservoir is granitic, i.e., not a material likely to provide caves for bats.
- It was noted that Alaska Department of Fish and Game files could provide valuable information based on recently conducted wildlife surveys.

### **Other Studies-Related Questions and Comments**

- Stakeholders recommended that baseline data be collected through informal surveys of key providers and user groups on recreation use in and downstream of the Project vicinity prior to there being any significant disturbance associated with conducting field studies. Collection of baseline recreation information should begin with interviews of lodge and air taxi operators. Preliminary activities in 2012 would not need to involve statistical surveys.
- Stakeholders noted that AEA should plan to conduct assessments of visual characteristics in the Project vicinity and be prepared to assess the Project's impacts on aesthetics as part of licensing studies.
- Stakeholders stated that AEA should begin planning soon for cultural resources investigations.
  - Cultural resource issues will be discussed at the meetings to be held during the week of December 5, 2011. Following initial identification of issues, AEA will reach out to native groups before conducting any studies.
- AEA should consider measures to prevent trespassing on native-owned properties during the conducting of studies or construction activities, and to prevent work crews from trespassing during non-work periods.

Meeting Summary  
Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project  
1:00-3:00 pm; October, 25 2011  
CIRI Building – 4th Floor Conference Room  
2525 C Street Anchorage, AK

**Action Items:**

- AEA will post to its website meeting agendas, presentations and handouts prior to scheduled work group meetings.
- AEA will post to its website the ILP schedule.