

Meeting Summary
Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project Licensing
Social Science Resources Planning Meeting
February 27, 2012
AEA Project Offices, First Floor Conference Room
411 W 4th Avenue, Anchorage, AK

Subject

- ILP Study Request Outlines and Study Plan Development for Social Sciences.

Attendees:

Organization	Name
AEA	Wayne Dyok
AEA	Betsy McGregor
ADF&G	Mark Fink
ADF&G	Joe Giefer
ADNR	Courtney Smith
BLM	Denton Hamby
BLM	Elijah Waters
DHSS	Paul Anderson
DHSS	Sarah Yoder
DOWL HKM	Tom Middendorf
DOWL HKM	Maryellen Tuttell
EPA-ADO	Jennifer Curtis
FERC	Jesse Fernandes (by phone)
FERC	David Turner
FERC	Ken Wilcox
HDR Alaska	Laurie Cummings
Kleinschmidt	Marty Phillips (by phone)
Knikatnu, Inc.	Tom Harris (by phone)
Louis Berger Group	Lisa McDonald (by phone)
MWH	Sarah Callaway
MWH	Kirby Gilbert
Natural Heritage Institute	Jan Konigsburg
NPS	Cassie Thomas
NPS consultant	Harry Williamson (by phone)
Northern Economics	Patrick Burden
URS	Paul Dworian
URS	Bridget Easley
USFWS	Mike Buntjer

Presentations



- Kirby Gilbert (MWH): Overview of near-term project calendar through November 2012
- Kirby Gilbert (MWH): Overview formal Study Request template
- Kirby Gilbert (MWH): Overview project licensing calendar through 2015
- Kirby Gilbert (MWH): Review of Table of Preliminary 2013-2014 Formal ILP Studies – Social Sciences
- Dr. Paul Anderson (DHHS): State of Alaska Health Impact Assessment Program

Recreation

1. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that the overall goal of the Recreation Resources Study is to develop a project recreation plan that incorporates findings from the resources assessment and anticipated project impacts.
 - a. Cassie Thomas (NPS) – Stated that some impacts will not be known until the results from other resource studies are known. What is the timing going to be for developing the recreation plan, since other study results should really drive some of the plan?
 - b. Wayne Dyok (AEA) – Stated that comparing the issues identified for the historic (1980s project), the current project, and those already identified by FERC, they are nearly one to one. A lot of things (resource- and impact-wise) have not changed, and will not change much. It is important to continue moving forward on parallel paths, not necessarily waiting for all the resource studies to be completed, before progressing on the recreation plan.
 - c. Cassie Thomas (NPS) – Noted that things have changed since the 1980s. Impacts will likely be different than those anticipated in the original project. She noted that ECPA now requires equal consideration of environment and development, and preparing a recreation management plan too soon, before some of the resource impacts are fully understood would not be helpful. As public agencies, how can we help the public understand the different mitigation options and alternatives, if they don't know what the impacts will be or what they are losing?
 - d. Kirby – Stated that the recreation plan won't be written this year, rather for 2013-14 timeframe; the 2012 work is mostly for information gathering.
2. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that with the Recreation Resources Assessment, we want to understand the current state of the recreational framework (hunting, fishing, etc.), as well as ensure that we have an appropriate study area. What are the recreation use patterns now? And how might the project (road corridors, transmission corridors, etc.) impact those patterns? How might this project impact the recreation opportunities? Surveys might be one method of gathering information. The study plan needs to help us understand all the impact mechanisms.
 - a. Cassie Thomas (NPS) – Asked if there is a plan for field staff, who might be at the site for other purposes (resource studies), to be provided with some type of form on which they could keep track of sightings of and/or encounters with

- recreationists. She stated that it didn't need to be a survey itself, or a study proper, but simply a way of observing recreation opportunities.
- b. Wayne Dyok (AEA) & Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that this is a great idea, but we need to be selective of the locations or how it gets applied, or it could be overwhelming (e.g. Montana Creek during high fishing season). How we use the information would still need to be determined, but something informal would definitely be useful.
 - c. Elijah Waters (BLM) – Stated that some dispersed recreation site information is available from BLM, as well as the Recreation Information Management System.
 - d. Cassie Thomas (NPS) – Stated that information may be available from boating clubs (Anchorage and Fairbanks), online forums, and air taxi operators.
 - e. Patrick Burden, (Northern Economics) – Stated that there will have to be cooperation between socioeconomic contractor and recreation contractor, since the topics have significant overlap.
3. Wayne – Asked the group if there were any general, big picture recreation considerations to be raised right now?
- a. Tom Harris (Knikatnu, Inc.) – Stated that it makes no sense, and native communities could not support, increasing access to a diminished resource, without taking actions to enhance the resources. Increasing access without increasing management is destructive.
 - b. Mark Fink (ADF&G) – Stated that ADF&G is trying to maintain public access to a common resource (fish and wildlife); from a management perspective, they look at project components in terms of access to the resource. They also look at how increased access might change management strategies. However, they'd like to establish a good baseline first, before impacts can be assessed.
 - c. Joe Giefer (ADF&G) – Stated that the use information that they have may show locations of where animals were ultimately taken, but the routes to those locations might not be known. Data gaps exist; trails are in place and used, sometimes regularly, that aren't mapped. GPS data points of unmapped trails would be useful, if observed during overflights for other resource studies.
 - d. Wayne Dyok (AEA) – Stated that they are talking with ADF&G about possibly accelerating some of the moose studies. Since it's been a high snow year, ADF&G is planning a flyover of the reservoir area to determine how many moose use it.
 - e. Tom Harris (Knikatnu, Inc.) – Stated that we should also consider not only what is lost (moose) but also a potential predator “explosion” if there is high moose mortality this year. Also, consider the potential user conflicts, if urban families begin hunting in more remote areas (as access increases); this competes with rural families.
 - f. It was noted that the Project area is within an area managed by ADF&G for predator control.
 - g. Cassie Thomas (NPS) – Stated that although important, subsistence is not recreation, so should be considered separately.

- h. Wayne Dyok (AEA) – Stated that consultants will be required to provide schedules for study activities, so that all of the disciplines can be put into a big-picture schedule. Until we get the detailed schedules of the different study plans, we won't be able to articulate how they will fit together.
- i. Harry Williamson (NPS consultant) – Asked if the gap analysis for recreation was posted. Betsy McGregor (AEA) replied that it will be posted.
- j. Tom Harris (Knikatnu, Inc.) – Asked that a recreation trends analysis be included in the analysis.

Aesthetics

1. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that the goal was to assess aesthetic conditions as they exist now, how they are used, and how the project (development and operation) might affect those resources. The 'night sky' is included under this topic, as an example of aesthetic resources. The project is in a fairly remote area, where not many people tend to recreate. However, aircraft overflights should be considered, and the impact to aesthetics from that standpoint. In 2012, we will start identifying key viewing areas, to establish where those locations might be. We know the project interfaces with public infrastructure at certain points (railheads, transmission corridors, etc.). We want to identify all these locations as well, so we can understand how to fully assess the current state of the resource.
2. Cassie Thomas (NPS) – Stated that in assessing the key viewpoints, trail identification will be important, particularly those that are unmapped (including winter trails).
3. Jennifer Curtis (EPA) – Stated that aesthetics/visual resources is a topic that often gets overlooked. It is encouraging to have this as a focus; however, it often can become contentious with regard to methodology. Point Thomson Draft EIS might be a good project to look at, in terms of how they approached this topic.

Socioeconomics

1. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that there will be one contract team to do socioeconomic and transportation studies. The topic is broken into three components (social conditions & public goods and services, regional economics, air quality), but will likely need to be further broken down.
2. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that air quality is a physical science, but has worked well under socioeconomics in other projects.
3. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that with regard to the regional component, how does the project change the regional economy? The price of power, tourism, and multiplier effects of construction, etc.
4. Pat Burden (Northern Economics) – Inquired as to how the DCCED consultation process would move forward. Also, the benefit/cost analysis wasn't in the RFP that went out – is it going to be required? Kirby Gilbert (MWH) replied that DCCED would like to help contribute to the study, so it might look more like a partnership. They may be able to perform some tasks or subtasks. This is a potentially big study topic. Scopes

of work will be refined after contractor selection including the need for things like a benefit-cost analysis.

5. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that the potential air quality impacts needs to be addressed. We may be looking at displaced fossil fuel emissions. What is the affected environment, what are the conditions now, and how might those conditions be impacted by the project? This topic is needed to help complete a FERC license application, and also for NEPA and for the health impact assessment. There is no specific work defined for 2012 for air quality, but information gathering activities may be appropriate.
6. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that there will be crossover from other resources (e.g. subsistence). We are going to need some agreement on the methodologies and who is doing what pieces of work for socioeconomic information gathering activities.

Transportation

1. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that transportation includes road, rail, and air transport systems. It is a cross over with recreation analyses, and will require integration with access management considerations. The final road corridor has not been determined yet, hopefully by the end of 2012 more information will be available.
2. Cassie Thomas (NPS) – Asked if the roads be maintained in the winter, during construction. If so, that would open the Denali Highway to the public during the winter, increasing access and recreation opportunities. Betsy McGregor (AEA) and Kirby Gilbert (MWH) answered. Betsy stated that the highway would likely be maintained during the winter if the Denali corridor is selected, but that has not been determined.
3. Transport considerations include construction in regards to how the physically large project components such as the turbine generators; will be brought to the site.
4. There will likely be some spur roads built during construction – how will this affect transportation for area users. Construction timing itself could be part of the mitigation.
5. Tom Mittendorf (DOWL HKM) – Asked whether the transmission line itself is being addressed in another resource study; is transmission access being looked at yet?
6. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that the transmission line can be thought of as a project itself. It will need to be assessed for all resources and impacts. Transmission and transportation corridors would be co-located where practicable, but not always. If not co-located then some spur roads may be needed to access transmission towers. Some of the initial results of these studies will help to define some of the alignments, for both transmission and transportation.

Health Impact Assessment

Presentation by Dr. Paul Anderson
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1. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that for this project, AEA would like to dovetail the HIA with preparation of the FERC license application, rather than just have it as an appendix to the EIS. Also there is a need to start considering the HIA at an earlier point (ILP study plans), rather than waiting until the NEPA process.
2. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) – Stated that some of the HIA components will be collected during other resource studies (e.g. socioeconomics). These things would fit together with and for the HIA studies.
3. Cassie Thomas (NPS) – Asked to what extent an HIA informs some of the project decisions? Construction crews, small, fixed-wing aircraft workers, etc. It would be wonderful if investment in analysis and research could help make things safer for people who will be directly exposed to construction risks.
 - a. Dr. Paul Anderson (DHSS) – HIA focuses on “outside the fence” of construction. Those things related to occupational safety for construction crews are generally covered under OSHA programs. They are not typically considered in the HIA. Where there is overlap with the people within a community is where the HIA will come into play.

Meeting Summary

1. Attendee introductions, meeting agenda and calendar overview by Kirby Gilbert (MWH).
 - a. April 27, 2012 – important date; comments due on PAD and study requests. Study request template is available.
 - b. June 11, 2012 – AEA to submit the formal study plan. Comments due by September 10, 2012.
 - c. October 10, 2012 – AEA to file revised study plan.
 - d. November 30, 2012 – FERC to issue study plan determination.
2. Overview of the template for formal study requests.
3. Overview of the licensing schedule through 2015.
 - a. Harry Williamson – asked for clarification on the dates of study plan submittals (drafts, revised, proposed final, etc.).
 - b. Jenny Seagon (USFWS) – asked for clarification on the relationship between the “Table of Preliminary 2013-2014 Formal ILP Studies – Social Sciences” and the study plan templates. Kirby clarified – on the table, each “Study Title” will essentially be a filled out in the template form.
4. Recreation
5. Aesthetics
6. Socioeconomics
7. Transportation
8. Health Impact Assessment – Presentation by Dr. Paul Anderson

Action Items

1. AEA to post recreation data gap analysis.