

Meeting Summary
Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project Licensing
AEA Offices, 813 Northern Lights Blvd, Anchorage, AK

Recreation TWG Meeting
February 25, 2013, 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Attendees:

Organization	Name
AEA	Wayne Dyok
AEA	Betsy McGregor
AEA	Julia Bosma
AEA	Justin Crowther
MWH	Kirby Gilbert
VNF	Charles Sensiba
McDowell Group	Donna Logan
McDowell Group	Bob Koenitzer
URS	Tim Kramer
URS	Louise Kling
URS	Jessica Evans
URS	Michael Goodwin
URS	Emily Whiteman*
URS	Patti Kroen*
URS	Mark Storm*
NPS	Cassie Thomas
NPS	Harry Williamson*
ADF&G	Mark Fink
ADF&G	Joe Giefer
Stoel Rives	Cherise Oram
CIRI	Dara Glass
BLM	Heath Emmons*
	Jan Konigsberg*
FERC	Ken Wilcox*
ADNR	Kristina Plett*
ADNR	Claire LeClair*
	Whitney Wolff*

*by telephone

Introduction and meeting overview — Tim (URS)

Kirby and Tim provided an overview of the meeting objectives and briefly went over the agenda. As outlined, the main objectives were to review the 2012 study results for Recreation and Aesthetics Resources; to discuss the intercept and mail survey instruments for the demand and

use portion of Recreation Resources; and finalize the locations of Analysis Points for Aesthetics Resources.

Review of 2012 Recreation Resources Study — Tim (URS) and Donna (McDowell)

Tim and Donna gave overview of 2012 Recreation Resources Study, clarifying that there will be a lot of people in the field for 2013 to gather intercept survey data. Donna distinguished the purposes of the intercept and mail surveys; they are related but have different purposes. Both have companion online surveys.

There modifications FERC made in their February 1 Study Plan Determination that slightly altered the survey plans outlined in Revised Study Plans submitted by AEA. These include removing “Don’t Know” and “Refused” code blocks from the online survey, adding suggested components to the surveys, extending intercept field seasons, and mapping trails in the immediate Project area at a 1:24,000 scale. Dara Glass (CIRI) expressed concern about the private lands and trails since some might be not legally open for access without permission. It was noted that this study is a baseline assessment of all trails; the purpose is to understand who is using the trails, and how they are accessing them. The recreation study team is sensitive to trespass issues and will factor that into the analysis and track the land ownership while mapping trails, and distinguishing the sources of trail information, particularly whether they are designated trails, public trails verses informal trails just identified by air.

A question was raised by Cassie Thomas (NPS) concerning the likelihood of the study area being changed as new information comes out from other study resources. The question was addressed by noting that different studies will have different study areas, and recreation has an appropriate study area through 2013. There is coordination with other studies taking place, and the study area may change for 2014. Kirby mentioned that on February 4, 2014 the Initial Study Report will likely have AEA’s recommendation on any changes to the study area based on other interdisciplinary information gathering in 2013.

Technical Difficulties

There is concern that stakeholders do not have always have access to most current materials like the Powerpoint presentations at the meeting. AEA will look into refining process of posting materials and notifying people on the listserv when new postings are made. Kirby Gilbert (MWH) noted that all the most up to date survey materials will be posted on March 7 and there will be a 15 day period to comment at that point as the survey instruments are being updated including updates based on comments received at this meeting.

Draft of Recreation Intercept Survey Instrument

Donna Logan (McDowell) presented the intercept survey draft in detail, going through each question. She noted that they are in the process of cleaning up the draft based on inter-coordination with other studies as well, while trying to minimize survey fatigue. Copies of the overview map were handed out.

Regarding the screening questions, Cassie Thomas (NPS) asked why the survey essentially excludes people who have already been surveyed in an early on question. Donna noted that this is being done to avoid duplication, and questions in the survey will cover all activities the respondent participates in. The mail survey also will give information that helps address multiple use. Dara Glass (CIRI) wondered if McDowell was going to have anyone riding the Hurricane Train. Donna and Bob Koenitzer (McDowell) responded, noting that they are planning on catching people at events along the railway, and will have surveyors in Talkeetna surveying the Hurricane and Aurora trains at the depot noting that there is will be a concentrated effort to get a hold of train passengers at the depot in Talkeetna.

The next series of questions discussed by Donna focused on recreational activities; in terms of where people are recreating and what activities are their primary purposes for being in the area. A detailed map with a grid was handed out. Donna gave information about how the hunting questions were going to be posed. There followed a discussion about whether respondents would be honest on the subject of hunting. Cassie suggested letting the respondents know that the surveyors were not going to report them to the Department of Fish and Game, and that their answers are anonymous. McDowell agreed to try to accommodate that suggestion. Given that there will be a lot of surveys during hunting season, perhaps questions could be worded differently for sensitivity. Bob and Donna clarified that the surveyors are well trained to read situations. The surveyors will be well-marked and look official.

McDowell was complimented on the information listing regarding activities they will be looking for in terms of when and where. Cassie suggested that when the trails data is complete, it will be good to see if the respondents were on a trail in our database, especially for aesthetics questions.

During the intercept survey, the respondents will be able to see the tabular data and pick from the lists. It is an efficient and effective way to move the survey forward. One benefit to having in-person surveyors is that there is someone there work them through the survey, especially for the economic questions.

The next series of questions were presented, focusing on spending. Questions about non-Alaska residents are mostly for NEI doing the economic and socioeconomic studies. Since spending is different for residents and non-residents, there will be slightly differently worded questions. Donna showed the group the map of the Boroughs, which is targeted at non-residents.

There was a discussion about the pre-testing that has been done so far, and how the survey instrument will be continually refined. There was a question about what happens if a respondent doesn't finish the survey. Bob commented that this does not happen often but if it does, McDowell will discuss whether the information gathered up to that point is worth including in analysis. They will be tracking number of refusals, and also watching for fatigue during interviews. It is not practical and nearly impossible to flip around the order of questions to get priority answers.

There were general questions about the intercept survey which were clarified by Bob and Donna. Kirby stated that the next draft of the survey instrument would be posted March 7 and there would then be time for more comments.

McDowell presented an overview of the tally sheet that would be used by surveyors. Cassie Thomas (NPS) suggested they consider adding mushing: by number of dog boxes and RVs with spare sleds. She also suggested adding horse trailers to the list to account for pack animals. Bob noted that everything will be marked and tallied by surveyors, and they are trained to spot unusual activities and target the participants. Kirby re-iterated that it will be posted on March 7 for comments

There was then a discussion about the field pre-testing process taking place in Talkeetna on March 15 and 16. It would be helpful if there was a sheet describing pretest agenda for March 7 posting. Harry Williamson (NPS) was concerned about changes to the survey instrument as a result of the pre-test, and having little time to comment on the changes. It was then suggested that a phone conference be scheduled for Monday March 18 at 2:00 AKST to discuss any changes that might happen as a result of the pre-test. URS will set up the meeting and notice will be posted on AEA's website.

Aesthetics Resources

Louise Kling (URS) gave a brief overview of the 2012 Aesthetics Resources Study and then moved on to present the 2013 winter Analysis Point locations. There was extensive discussion regarding the location of the Analysis Points on private land and public or state land. Louise stated they are being careful about trespass concerns onto CIRI-owned property, and AEA has a packet of permitting type information AEA will use to prepare permit applications that includes information and pictures of the sound monitoring equipment that would be used. If the aesthetics study team is unable to get to an Analysis Point location this year because of permitting, they will hopefully get to it next year. The points that were generated at this stage are a "wishlist" and the feasibility of getting to all of these points will change. In the meantime, they are working where they can. URS is working through Julia Bosma (AEA) on permitting issues.

Cherise Orem (Stoel Rives) inquired about alternate locations to Analysis Points, and what information would be lost by using an alternate Analysis Point. This led into a discussion about what the public would see on an alternate Point and the necessity of getting data that the public would not see at an originally identified Point. The Point on private land would not create a new opportunity for the public, unless there was a road or easement in the future. For the purposes of gathering baseline data, the originally identified Points are preferred. Cherise stated that it would be helpful to know what analysis would be lost if alternate Points are used. CIRI would like to know as close as possible the location of Analysis Points on their private property. URS is working with Julia to get permitting information to CIRI to review, including a map of the Gold Creek corridor proposed Points.

There will be a June TWG meeting to discuss summer Analysis Points. For spring, they are not expected to be very different locations than winter. The study team will also be present for the March 8 TWG to further discuss aesthetics or recreation, but will mostly focus on river recreation for that meeting.

Action Items

- AEA: Notice Participants when meeting new/updated materials are posted onto the website
- McDowell: Create verbiage for the intercept and mail surveys that gives participants a certain degree of anonymity
- McDowell: Edit intercept survey questions 5a-5h to include more activities
- McDowell: Create a sheet describing pretest agenda for March 7 posting
- URS: Set up tele-conference on March 18 to discuss changes to the survey instrument as a result of the pre-test

Important Upcoming Dates

- Intercept and Mail Survey
 - March 7: AEA post draft on
 - March 22: Comments due from stakeholders
 - March 29: File Final Survey
- March 18: One hour conference call regarding a debrief on the survey pre-test