



SUSITNA-WATANA HYDRO

Meeting Notes Instream Flow Study Technical Team (IFSTT) Conference Call April 26, 2013

LOCATION: Teleconference

TIME: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm (AKDT)

SUBJECT: Middle River Focus Areas and Lower River IFS Modeling

GOAL: To discuss adjustments to Middle River Focus Areas, review Lower River IFS modeling approach and identify topics for next IFS technical team meeting

PARTICIPANTS: Alice Shelly (R2), Becky Long (Coalition for Susitna Dam Alternatives), Betsy McGregor (AEA), Bill Fullerton (TT), Bill Miller (MEC), Catherine Berg (USFWS), Chris Holmquist-Johnson (USGS), Dana Schmidt (GAI), Dudley Reiser (R2), Eric Rothwell (NMFS), Greg Auble (USGS), Jeff Davis (ARRI), Joe Klein (ADF&G), Kasey Clipperton (GAI), Kate Knox (R2), Kim Sager (DNR), Laura Arendall (R2), Leanne Hanson (USGS), Leslie Jensen (ARRI), Lyle Zevenbergen (TT), MaryLou Keefe (R2), Michael Barclay (HDR), Michael Lilly (GWS), Mike Buntjer (USFWS), Phil Hilgert (R2), Sandie Hayes (AEA), Steve Padula (McMillen), Sue Walker (NMFS)

This was the first of what will be several meetings of the Instream Flow Study Technical Team (IFSTT), that are designed to allow more detailed discussion of technical topics than could otherwise be achieved during normal Technical Work Group meetings. The IFSTT meetings are intended to vet, discuss and, where possible, reach agreement on technical issues and questions regarding the implementation of various elements of the IFS for the Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project. This first meeting was focused primarily on two issues – potential adjustments to Middle River Focus Areas, and a discussion of the Lower River Instream Flow sampling approach (see Meeting Agenda below). Some discussion also occurred early on in the meeting regarding the habitat classification scheme and potential differences of opinion concerning the interpretation of specific habitat types that were used in the habitat mapping exercise. A summary of the discussion related to each of these topics is presented below.

MAJOR TOPICS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

- Reviewed general concerns of USFWS/NMFS about elements of the habitat classification system that will be used on the Project. This included a discussion of McKenzie Creek island “side slough” habitat types that might instead be designated as “cross-over channels.” It was noted that the need for any modifications to the specific habitat types would be realized as part of the more detailed habitat mapping that would occur in 2013 field studies. Adjustments could then be made. As a preliminary step, it was agreed that the habitat types of each FA be delineated and provided to agencies for review, with the objective of identifying any habitat type “calls” that they consider questionable. These will be noted and briefly discussed during the next IFSTT meeting, and further evaluated as part of the field studies.
- Discussed portions of the Susitna River near Lane Creek, McKenzie Creek, and Oxbow 1 as potential Focus Areas that could be studied in MR- 7, instead of FA-171 located in MR-2. This was a follow-up to the FERC determination of February 1, 2013 (page B-92) indicating a move of Focus Area from MR-2 to MR-7 should be discussed with agencies. This was the major topic discussed during the meeting and included reviews of each potential candidate site (i.e., pros and cons including railroad restrictions). The Thermal Infrared Imagery (TIR) completed by Watershed Sciences was reviewed for each of the candidate sites noting areas of apparent groundwater influence;

meeting attendees generally acknowledged the value of the TIR. The discussion resulted in agreement of the selection of a new FA located near Oxbow 1 (FA-113), and dropping FA-171.

- Discussed Lower River modeling approach, noting that the complexity of the habitats will require development of a series of individual habitat specific models that can be used for evaluating habitat-flow relationships within areas considered biologically important to fish. Question was raised regarding selection criteria for the tributaries proposed for study in 2013. It was noted the tributaries were selected based on studying a subset of those considered biologically important to fish based in part on 1980s studies as well as current information. Additional tributaries may be studied in 2014 based on results in 2013.
- Response to the FERC determination concerning the fish barrier studies was discussed and it was noted that the revised plan would be delivered on May 15; and will follow with a 15-day comment period; the TM for this is due on June 30.
- Topics for the next IFSTT were discussed with emphasis placed on a series of potential topics related to HSC and HSI data collection.

DECISIONS REACHED

- Agencies and AEA were in agreement that FA-171 (located in MR-2) will be dropped leaving a single FA (FA-173) in MR-2 for investigation.
- Agencies and AEA were in agreement that a new FA would be located in MR-7 (FA-113), and that it would be located in a reach of the Susitna River that includes the Oxbow 1 area (including unnamed tributary PRM 113.7 and Slash and Gash Creeks). This area is immediately adjacent to FA-115, so the hydraulic modeling will encompass both areas together. However, the two Focus Areas will be considered separately for reporting purposes. The lower boundary of the area will be below the unnamed tributary (~PRM 113.6) and the upper boundary at ~PRM 115.3.
- Agencies and AEA were in agreement that the IFS work in the Lower River Reach should proceed as described during the meeting; some further discussion of tributaries is needed relative to 2014 studies but will depend on results of 2013 studies.
- Topics for the next IFSTT meeting were reviewed, and it was agreed that the primary focus would be to discuss target species and HSC/HSI data collection techniques; HSC/HSI topics of stranding/trapping modeling, varial zone modeling, effective spawning were considered lower priority topics at this time.

ACTION ITEMS

The following ACTION ITEMS were identified:

Action Items	Date	Responsibility
1) Update Post FERC SPD Recommendations Tech Memo and file with FERC by 5/31/13. Include a map of each FA depicting the habitat types and an updated table from the RSP indicating the proportion of each reach included within the FAs. Provide the maps if available sooner than the TM.	05/31/13	R2
2) Post a map of each Focus Area (including new FA-113) showing the habitat types identified by HDR.	As soon as available	R2
3) Develop meeting agenda and meeting materials for the next meeting scheduled to occur 5/17/13, to cover the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Target Species and Life stages ▫ HSC – 2013 sampling effort, target locations, microhabitat data to be collected ▫ Habitat Classification System – provide clarified set of definitions from RSP and approach for moving forward without changing the classification system 	05/13	R2
4) Discuss 2-D/1-D modeling (development of digital terrain model, transect selection, calibration flows, data aggregation, etc.) off-line with Joe Klein-ADF&G.	05/13	R2 and ADF&G
5) As field schedules become established, coordinate with agencies to allow them to participate on an opportunist basis.	As soon as available	R2
6) Develop summary of April 26, 2013 conference call and identify decisions and action items.	05/13	R2

**Instream Flow Study
Technical Team Conference Call
Agenda
26 April 2013**

TIME: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm AKDT

OBJECTIVES: *Discuss adjustments to Middle River Focus Areas, review Lower River IFS modeling approach and identify topics for next IFS technical team meeting*

GoTo Meeting: <https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/443198783>
1-800-315-6338 Code 3957#

Agenda Items

9:00 am Introductions – Review Agenda and FERC Study Plan Determination

9:10 am Discuss potential adjustments to Middle River Focus Areas

11:15 am **Break**

11:30 am Lower River modeling approach and 2013 Lower River data collection

12:30 pm Identify HSC/HSI, target species, and other agenda topics for next conference call

12:50 pm List decisions and action items

1:00 pm Adjourn