



SUSITNA-WATANA HYDRO

Meeting Notes Social Sciences Technical Workgroup Meeting September 11, 2013

LOCATION: AEA Offices – Board Room
813 Northern Lights Blvd
Anchorage, AK

TIME: 8:30 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.

SUBJECT: Quarterly Status of 2013 Studies

GoTo MEETING: <https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/894915663>
1-800-315-6338 Code 3957#

Goal: Brief Licensing Participants on Progress of Recreation, Socioeconomic, Air, Subsistence and Health Impact Analysis Studies

ATTENDEES: Mark Fink ADF&G, Joe Giefer ADF&G, Davin Holen ADF&G, Justin Crowther AEA, Wayne Dyok AEA, Betsy McGregor AEA, Dara Glass CIRI, Maryellen Tuttell DOWL HKM, Tracie Krauthoefer HDR, Donna Logan McDowell Group, Kirby Gilbert MWH, Heather Williams MWH, Marci Balge NewFields, Pat Burden Northern Economics, Jonathan King Northern Economics, Cassie Thomas NPS, Tim Kramer URS, Chuck Sensiba Van Ness Feldman

ON PHONE: Jeanne Swartz ADEC, Sarah Bullock BLM, Heath Emmons BLM, Becky Long Coalition for Susitna Dam Alternatives, Adison Smith DOWL HKM, John Gangemi ERM, Suzanne Novak FERC, Phil Devita HMMH, Phillip Manning KTNA, Steve Padula McMillen, Whitney Wolff Talkeetna Community Council, Louise Kling URS, Emily Whiteman URS

This was the third quarterly social sciences interim progress Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting for 2013. The quarterly TWG meetings are intended to provide status on study plan progress, communication and discussion regarding any study plan variances that may be required given actual field conditions, and planned next steps.

The agenda, documents, and supporting presentations can be found on the meetings page at <http://www.susitna-watanahydro.org/>. These meeting notes are intended to supply information and important consultation not included in the provided materials.

Following introductions and a brief overview regarding overall project status, presentations were made on the following studies:

- Health Impact Assessment;
- Air Quality, Transportation and Socioeconomic;
- Subsistence;
- Aesthetics; and
- Recreation and River Recreation.

Project Status Overview (Kirby Gilbert MWH)

Final study plans for most of the 58 studies are now posted on the documents page at <http://www.susitna-watanahydro.org/> for reference. The final study plans incorporate FERC study plan determinations that modified the revised study plans. Scheduling for the fourth quarterly TWG meetings will be announced soon. The next formal reporting on these social science studies will be February 3, 2014 with submittal of the Initial Study Report (ISR).

Health Impact Assessment (Marci Balge NewFields)

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) study is continuing with the data collection phase. Assessment parameters follow state HIA guidance, as well as internationally recognized methodology. Coordination and cross-participation with other studies is critical and is proceeding as planned. Communications are occurring by telephone and email throughout the data collection process. Ground-truthing of literature review is ongoing. The HIA study has not had any variances from the FERC-approved study plan to date. HIA data gaps will not be fully known until other study data is available. Baseline conditions are being established, and then cumulative impacts of the Project will be evaluated considering movement of people into various areas for work opportunities. Examples of potential impacts could be housing price changes, disease rate changes, etc.

Air Quality (Phil Devita HMMH)

Air Quality study is continuing to collect existing ambient air quality, meteorological and climate information. The Project area is “unclassified” in terms of air quality attainment and this Project is not expected to change that. Most of the state is “unclassified”, due to lack of monitoring station data. Baseline fossil fuel emissions associated with regional power generation will be addressed quantitatively. Some possible Project components, such as a Portland cement plant, are being considered qualitatively at this time since they are not yet known. If they become well defined before the license application, the analysis would be updated.

Detailed climate change and greenhouse gas studies are not being required by FERC for this Project. AEA will be summarizing the applicable information from Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership’s (KHLP) 2012 climate study for their proposed Keeyask Generation Project in northern Manitoba, Canada. That study is available in its entirety at KHLP’s website (<http://keeyask.com/>). Fugitive dust emissions are being analyzed utilizing the probabilistic estimate of reservoir operating levels that is currently available. GIS analysis could be done to determine shoreline lengths, and AEA is conducting soils work that will be available to help determine the composition of fugitive dust. However, wind variability is the critical parameter and it is difficult to quantify, so the fugitive dust assessment will be qualitative at this time. Impact analyses are intended to be completed in the later license application phase, not the ISR/data collection phases.

There was discussion about the potential need to define representative conditional years (i.e. dry year, average year, etc). That is likely to occur in the hydrology or water resources working groups, rather than this working group.

Both operational and construction impacts are being considered. Emissions are being considered for the region both with and without the hydro project development. PROMOD model runs will analyze displacement of fossil fuels by region (Fairbanks, Anchorage, etc) and will be available to other studies.

Transportation (Maryellen Tuttell DOWL HKM)

Transportation study is continuing in the data collection phase. River transportation is the area with the most remaining work to complete, since there is not a lot of existing documentation to mine. Phone interviews and information from Recreation/Subsistence interviews are the primary mechanisms for filling data gaps. The study area has been expanded to include locations (Whittier, Wasilla, Houston Railroad) with different facilities and operational times than were present in the original study area and this was noted as a variance from the FERC-approved study plan. The potential railroad expansion is being considered. Information being collected here is relevant whether or not the expansion projects happen. Currently, the study assumes use of main line, but assesses possible alternative

scenarios for expanded rail-spur uses. Existing conditions include existing airstrips and proposed upgrades that are well defined. The proposed Project airstrip is not well defined, so is not included in the ISR, but would be included in the Updated Study Report (USR), with an impacts analysis in the license application. Impact analysis process is iterative. Collect data, develop impact mechanisms, analyze for license application (Exhibit E). The USR is planned for early 2015. The draft license application is expected to be submitted for stakeholder comments in 2015.

Socioeconomics (Pat Burden Northern Economics, Jonathan King Northern Economics)

The Regional Economic Evaluation is progressing with no variances to date. Modeling started with a previous pipeline project model for efficiency. Engineering reports are needed in order to develop the With Project scenario in detail. Response rates for industry executive interviews have been very good, on the order of 85-90%. Interviewee list is provided in the study plan appendix and will be included in the ISR. Other area projects such as military expansion, mineral exploration and natural gas pipeline, are included in the model underlying both the Regional Economic Evaluation and the Social Conditions Study. They are assumed to be online if they are “reasonably foreseeable”, i.e. in a plan and funded. Speculative projects will not be included. The Regional Economic Evaluation focuses on power whereas cumulative impacts are considered in the Social Conditions Study. Some Quality of Life interviews were deferred to 2014 but are not expected to impact overall delivery schedule.

Initial look at resident mail survey results is very encouraging. Good response rates, heavy on paddling. So far there are approximately 1,700 respondents of which 600 were recreational boaters. About 500 of the boating responses had fully usable data representing about 200 different sites and thousands of trips. Motorized use is more tied to hunting data. All types of paddling (i.e. canoe, kayak, raft) will be modeled as one preference function. Intercept and online survey data that is part of the river recreation study will be incorporated later. Those surveys capture non-resident use. The intercept study also focuses on the study area, whereas the mail survey covers a broader geography.

Subsistence (Tracie Krauthoefer HDR, Davin Holen ADF&G)

Subsistence study data collection is well underway. ADF&G harvest ticket data for communities outside the 37 Project study communities has been unavailable despite having appropriate agreements in place. Workshop participation has been great. The final workshop in Tyonek was completed prior to this meeting. Knik and Chickaloon workshops are still in planning due to negotiations regarding logistics and data review. Those are expected to be completed in early winter 2013. The data will most likely not be included in the ISR, but will be included in the Updated Study Report.

Household incomes depicted in the graph are believed to be means rather than medians. Regional subsistence maps will be included in appendices. Study area maps will be included in the body of the ISR. Narrative discussing changes in resource usage due to declines in local king salmon, flood impacts, roadkill program beneficiaries, nonresident hunting pressure, etc. will be included in the report, at least qualitatively. ADF&G Anchorage, Dillingham and Douglas offices are supporting this large effort. HDR’s map application was a tremendous help to the effort. Talkeetna, Trapper Creek and Chase are the only remaining survey communities, and they will be surveyed at their next community council meetings. Talkeetna’s council is meeting October 7th, 2013.

Aesthetics (Louise Kling URS)

Aesthetics study team is currently focused on documenting baseline conditions. Summer trail access proved easier, so went to a lot more locations than during other seasons. Potential for confounding Project study impacts was handled by 1) obtaining the project permitting database to see planned activities by location, 2) talking to project study leads to understand the detailed nature of the work involved and sound signatures that could be expected, and 3) using Spider tracking (time, location) data from project aircraft to identify project traffic and eliminate it from the baseline data. The majority of collected data was “natural state”. Project traffic can be easily removed. There are areas of high noise density such as refueling sites and camp locations. Monitors were still deployed near the hubs to

provide validation for construction noise modeling assumptions. There is also significant non-Project noise due to mineral exploration and hunting. FAA requires certain flight paths and flight elevations, but AEA is doing what they can to minimize noise impacts on locals.

No recon over or collection on lands owned by CIRI or Cook Inlet Region Village Corporations were conducted this quarter. That work has been deferred until 2014, and AEA is hopeful that agreement can be reached with these landowners to conduct the studies as planned. Resource agencies and other stakeholders expressed disappointment that there were not specific TWG discussions regarding whether alternate 2013 locations may have been more useful than deferral of the planned sites to 2014. The deferral plan was discussed during the June 12th, 2013 TWG meeting, and no proposed substitute monitoring locations were noted at that time, so AEA proceeded with deferral to 2014. A request was made for future map presentations to show what locations were not visited in 2013 in addition to the ones that were.

Concerns were voiced regarding a desire for more stakeholder involvement in study decision-making when adjustments are being made. AEA will continue to engage openly with stakeholders with the goal of facilitating and improving communication and collaboration opportunities. A flowchart showing variances for all studies was suggested. Three focus groups are already planned for 2014, and will provide additional stakeholder involvement opportunities.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that Denali climbers can sometimes see features in Talkeetna. The study team has not been able to show any sensitivity for potential viewing of the Project features that far away. Study team will look into it and verify whether current approximate 35-mile viewshed assumption is appropriate.

Recreation (Tim Kramer URS, Donna Logan McDowell Group)

Recreation study is underway. Recreational inventory maps are being developed. Presentation mistakenly shows a total of 64 summer recreation facilities, the correct total is 36 since waysides without trash cans or toilets are now tracked separately. Team is working with Alaska Railroad to take a "high rail" for documenting dispersed use sites along the railroad corridor. Trail names are being documented as they are discovered during interviews. Not a lot of discrepancies between user information so far. For unnamed trails, names are being assigned according to the BLM naming conventions. Authorized and unauthorized trails will be determined mainly by GIS analysis with the land ownership data layer. Team is not identifying a lot of trails on private lands so far.

In-person intercepts and surveys are both being positively received and experiencing higher-than-industry-standard response rates. Team is working with Northern Economics and Veritas to code the data. As of 9/10/13 there are 945 completed intercept surveys, 1,887 observational intercept tallies, 51 leave-behind cards and 1,750 mail surveys. Leave-behind card dataset will be small since some agencies did not allow use of the cards within their campgrounds. Mail survey data appears to be high quality. There are some geographic gaps. Some minor survey changes are being made before the second mailing to 7,500 different households, such as extending the timeline to capture summer 2013 activities and adding party size age breakouts.

Some recreational access providers have contacted the Talkeetna Community Council indicating that they have not been contacted. Also, the Council itself has not been contacted for interviews. Team has a very large candidate list. If there are people who want to be interviewed, please provide contacts to AEA for inclusion. The team is very interested in hearing from them.

River Recreation and Flow (John Gangemi ERM)

Internet survey was launched in late June and will continue indefinitely. A total of 55 complete responses had been received as of 9/11/13. Responses include use of all three river reaches, sometimes multiple reaches. There are Devils Canyon use responses as well. Team obtained aeriels and video documentation of Devil Creek use in August. A determination of whether to extend the study area may be made following analysis of the additional data. Flow range analysis will be provided for various types of watercraft. Hydrographs will be generated that could be

compared with other study data, although they may be at different scales. Low flow data from earlier years and executive interviews are being utilized since we did not have low flow conditions thus far this year. Optimal flow range for Devils Canyon has not been assessed yet. Some anecdotal evidence indicates that 29-30,000 cfs may be a preferred range. Operators who extended their season due to high flows may be re-interviewed.

Action Item**Responsibility**

Update aesthetics maps to include 2013 sites NOT visited superimposed on the collected data.	Louise Kling URS
Consider providing a flowchart of variances for studies including what substitutes, removals or deferrals were decided upon (if any) to facilitate stakeholder information access.	Betsy McGregor AEA
Re-evaluate whether 35-mile viewshed radius is appropriate to the project. Evaluate visual sensitivity of Project to Denali climbers.	Louise Kling URS
Provide information regarding recreational access providers and others who are interested in being interviewed to Betsy McGregor AEA for distribution to appropriate study lead(s).	Whitney Wolff Talkeetna Community Council
Provide Devils Canyon user information to Betsy McGregor AEA for distribution to appropriate study lead(s).	Whitney Wolff Talkeetna Community Council
Contact Talkeetna Community Council to arrange interview.	Tim Kramer URS
Post online survey information to Knik Canoe and Kayak and Alaska Outdoors Forum list-serves.	John Gangemi ERM
Follow up on original interviews with Mahays, an operator whose season was extended due to high flows.	John Gangemi ERM