

**Meeting Notes  
Social Sciences  
Technical Workgroup Meeting  
November 7, 2013**

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

**TIME:** 8:30 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.

**SUBJECT:** Quarterly Status of 2013 Studies

**GoTo MEETING:** <https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/658225063>  
1-800-315-6338 Code 3957#

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

**ATTENDEES:** Mark Fink ADF&G, Julie Anderson AEA, Wayne Dyok AEA, Andrew Fraiser AEA, Betsy McGregor AEA, Dara Glass CIRI, Sarah Yoder DHSS, Maryellen Tuttell DOWL HKM, Tracie Krauthoefer HDR, Donna Logan McDowell Group, Kirby Gilbert MWH, Heather Williams MWH, Marci Balge NewFields, Jonathan King Northern Economics, Cassie Thomas NPS, Tim Kramer URS, Chuck Sensiba Van Ness Feldman, Emily Anderson Wild Salmon Center, Tom Middendorf, DOWL HKM

**ON PHONE:** Becky Long Coalition for Susitna Dam Alternatives, Sara Mason DOWL HKM, Jennifer Curtis EPA, John Gangemi ERM, Ken Wilcox FERC, Phil Devita HMMH, Jan Konigsberg NHI, Pat Burden Northern Economics, Harry Williamson NPS contractor, Whitney Wolff Talkeetna Community Council, Louise Kling URS.

This was the fourth 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 meeting agenda, documents, and supporting presentations can be found on the “previous meetings” tab at <http://www.susitna-watanahydro.org/>. These meeting notes are intended to capture the primary discussion points and consultation not included in the provided materials.

**Project Status Overview (Kirby Gilbert MWH)**

The next formal reporting on all 58 studies will be February 3, 2014 with submittal of the Initial Study Report (ISR).

Upcoming social sciences milestones and meetings are as follows:

- 2/3/14 ISR FERC submittal
- 2/13/14 Social Sciences ISR and first quarterly 2014 TWG meeting
- 3/5/14 ISR meeting summary FERC filing
- 4/4/14 Stakeholder dispute FERC filing deadline
- 6/4/14 FERC determination on dispute filings

- 6/11/14 Social Sciences second quarterly TWG meeting

Meeting materials and any schedule changes will be posted at <http://www.susitna-watanahydro.org/>.

#### **Study 15.8 Health Impact Assessment (Marci Balge NewFields)**

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) study is proceeding as planned. HIA study is highly dependent upon other study results that are just starting to become available. Health clinic site visits are occurring in conjunction with ADF&G subsistence surveys. HIA team recognizes that clinic capacity, staff and available services change over time; therefore, the clinic data needs to be almost continually updated.

#### **Studies 15.5 and 15.6 Socioeconomics (Jonathan King Northern Economics, Pat Burden Northern Economics)**

The Regional Economic Evaluation is proceeding as planned. The study team is documenting assumptions for AEA review as an interim check-in step. The assumption information will be included in the ISR for licensing participants review and comment.

The Social Conditions and Public Goods and Services study is proceeding as planned, with some additions to the list of affected communities to align with changes in transportation study locations. Some quality of life interviews have been rescheduled to 2014, but no impact is anticipated to the overall schedule. The quality of life survey was included in the RSP. The quality of life surveys target a different set of respondent categories than the executive interviews. Lists of both target groups were provided in the RSP. Known proposed changes to the survey instrument will be included in the ISR. If substantive changes are proposed after the ISR submittal, they will be vetted with stakeholders during future TWG meetings.

Data processing is underway for the first block of mail survey data. All data except the ADF&G hunting data is being incorporated into the RUM. Although the ADF&G hunting data is not yet available, the mail survey data appears to be adequate and perhaps even more robust than the ADF&G data, since ADF&G reporting is not strictly enforced. ADF&G hunting data will still be obtained at some point, but the study is not on hold waiting for it. The ADF&G fishing data has been received and is being incorporated into the RUM.

#### **Study 15.7 Transportation (Maryellen Tuttell DOWL HKM)**

The transportation study is proceeding as planned, with additional ports included as discussed at previous TWG meetings.

#### **Study 15.9 Air Quality (Phil Devita HMMH)**

The Air Quality study is generally continuing as planned. Quantitative estimates of emission sources during Project construction and operation is planned to be looked at later in 2014 when more Project design detail should be available. Qualitative analyses will be included in the ISR and USR instead.

Future “without Project” scenarios currently extrapolate generation source assumptions from existing generation fleet mix and known generation projects under development, assuming primarily economic drivers rather than regulatory drivers. Some participants suggested that, given the State’s goal to reach 50% renewables statewide, it may be useful to calculate statewide % renewables or other similar scenarios for the current “without Project” scenario.

AEA is reviewing a recent report regarding methane gases from reservoir sediment that was done for the Keeyask Hydroelectric Project proposed by Manitoba Hydro in Canada. The current plan is to use that framework to discuss any potential for methane emissions using that document and provide this information as part of the license application (which more specifically addresses potential project impacts), not the ISR (which is more to document baseline conditions).

Cargo jet emissions and known air transportation corridors will be included qualitatively in both air quality and transportation studies. Quantitative analyses may be done later, as possible and included as part of the license application. Engineering has not yet progressed to a point where determinations of potential local industry development can be made.

#### **Study 14.5 Subsistence (Tracie Krauthoefer HDR)**

Subsistence study data collection is well underway. 2013 Copper River area results have been sent to communities for review. 2013 Susitna River area results will be sent to communities over the next two weeks for review. ADF&G is planning to submit their final 2013 household harvest survey report toward the end of November 2013. Hunting constraints due to 2013 flooding will be discussed in the harvest survey report. Existing data for impacted areas will also be reviewed and incorporated where possible. It appears that the most recent previous data is from the 1980s.

Knik and Chickaloon workshops are still in planning due to negotiations regarding logistics and data review. It is hoped that the workshops will proceed during winter 2013 for inclusion with previously identified 2014 communities.

Upcoming 2014 harvest survey starting dates ADFG has negotiated with study communities:

Mendeltna- January 8, 2014

Tolsona- January 8, 2014

Nelchina- January 8, 2014

Glenallen- January 12, 2014

Tazlina- January 12, 2014

Paxson- January 23, 2014

Gulkana- February 2, 2014

Lake Louise- Mid-February, 2014

Tonsina- March 24, 2014

#### **Study 12.6 Aesthetics (Louise Kling URS)**

Aesthetics study team provided 2013 study site visit summary counts, including multiple visits to the same site. Fall 2013 visual surveys were conducted after hunting season; whereas Fall 2013 sound surveys were conducted during hunting season. A distribution of sampling sites was successful across Project Components and Land Status (for those lands that were accessible). Approximately half of the recorded soundscape data has now been processed.

There were discussions regarding Project visibility from high elevations at Denali National Park, and potential economic impact to tourism industries. Based on initial viewshed analysis, the aesthetics team plans to analyze a 30-mile buffer in detail and provide more general narrative on visibility from further distances. Licensing participants may submit relevant photos to assist with commentary on potential visibility.

The 2013 target analysis locations that fell within unpermitted land areas were adjusted where possible, or deferred to 2014 for cases where no suitable alternate location was available. A complete tabulation of target locations, alternate locations and/or deferral status will be provided in the ISR. Rationale for specific adjustments will also be provided graphically where appropriate. Since the aesthetics study does not have two-year data collection requirements, particular site deferrals from 2013 to 2014 are not considered a variance. The February 13, 2014 ISR/1Q TWG meeting will be an opportune time for licensing participants to discuss progress documented in the ISR, and the 2014 site visit effort.

Interdisciplinary coordination, particularly with the geophysical study team, has proved mutually beneficial.

#### **Study 12.5 Recreation (Tim Kramer URS, Donna Logan McDowell Group)**

Recreation study is proceeding as planned. Trail digitization accuracy was improved for areas where imagery became available from other studies. Some imagery is still in procurement, and digitized trail accuracy will be increased in those areas when it becomes available. The 17(b) and RS2477 easement GIS information will be documented including the sources of that information. The "high rail" Alaska Railroad survey was completed and focused on public trail access, rather than individual cabin trails, along the railroad corridor.

In-person intercepts and leave-behind surveys are both continuing as planned. Individual responses appear to be complete. The intercept survey, including the online site for leave-behind card responses, will remain open through March 2014. Winter sampling is limited to maintained road sections and is experiencing lower volume than summer sampling, as expected.

The first mail survey is mostly complete, although a few responses are still trickling in. The approximately 25% response rate is quite good. The second mail survey went out in October. As of November 6, 2013 there are 970 mail surveys and 221 online surveys for a total of 1191 or 15.8%. This is a higher response rate than the first survey had at the same time post-mailing, likely due to the \$1 incentives mailed out with the surveys. Some minor additions were made to the mail survey language prior to the October mailing. And the sample size was increased in order to help ensure ample response from people closest to the project location. The mail survey will close at the end of December 2013. A second non-response bias phone survey will be conducted to capture any seasonality differential between the two mailings (one generally captures winter recreation activities, one generally captures summer recreation activities).

No executive interviews were conducted in September and October 2013. There will be more conducted through the end of the year.

**Study 12.7 River Recreation and Flow (John Gangemi ERM)**

The Internet survey was launched in late June and will continue indefinitely. Outreach was made to twelve new forums since the third quarterly TWG meeting, including canoe, kayak, raft, hunting, fishing, airboat, floatplane focused groups. The survey has also been circulating on lower 48 states’ message boards. As of November 5, 2013, a total of 110 complete and 138 partial responses have been received. The survey does not require contact information, so partial respondents cannot be reminded to finish the survey. There are indications that some partial respondents have come back to finish the survey. The survey team does use contact information, if provided, to request clarification on particular responses. Responses are continuing to reflect use of all three river reaches. Devils Canyon users in particular tend to use multiple reaches in a single trip. Responses reflect about 66% Alaska residents. The study team now has photo and video documentation for a variety of flows including 16,600 cubic feet per second (cfs), 17,300 cfs, 25,900 cfs and 30,800 cfs flows at Devils Canyon. Executive interviews were not conducted in the previous quarter but are planned through the end of the year. Float hunting opportunities did not appear to be impeded by high flows this year. Whitewater feature names do not appear to be standardized. They tend to be small and can have multiple features across a particular river mile location. A focus group of river recreation users is chartered with reaching concurrence on both names and difficulty ratings for all of these micro-features. That information can be shared with other teams that may find it useful, including the ethnogeography team.

**Action Item**

**Responsibility**

Submit applicable mountaineering photos that show viewscape of upper Susitna River Valley (if any are located) to <b>Betsy McGregor</b> AEA for distribution to the aesthetics team.	<b>Whitney Wolff</b> Talkeetna Community Council
Document data sources when presenting 17(b) and RS2477 GIS data.	<b>Tim Kramer</b> URS