



SUSITNA-WATANA

HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

Meeting Summary
Fisheries Resources Agency Workshop
2012 Studies and Issues
1- 4 p.m., December 7, 2011
Held at AEA Project Offices Conference Room,
411 W 4th Avenue, Suite 1, Anchorage, AK

Purpose of Meeting:

Present and discuss 2012 Study Plans.

Attendees:

AEA	Betsy McGregor, Env. Manager
AEA	Emily Ford, Public Affairs
AEA	Wayne Dyok, Project Manager
AEA	Audrey Alstrom
AEA	Doug Ott
Cardno-Entrix	Jim Gill
MWH	Kirby Gilbert
Long View Associates	Steve Padula
Cardno-Entrix	Woody Trihey
Cardno-Entrix	Lynn Noel
Cardno-Entrix	Craig Addley
Cardno-Entrix	Mitchel Katzel
Cardno-Entrix	Steve Nevares
Aquacoustics	Don Degan
Aquacoustics	A. M. Mueller
MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission	Larry Engel
ADNR, Water	Kim Sager
LGL Alaska	Michael Link
LGL Alaska	Sean Burril
ADF&G	Jack Erickson
ADF&G	Lowell Fair
Cramer Fish Science	Dani Evenson
USBLM, Glennallen	Tim Sundlov
Coalition for Susitna Dam Alternatives	Becky Long
DOWL HKM	Kacy Hillman
USFWS	Jennie Spegon
ADF&G	Joe Giefer
NMFS – PRD	Mandy Migura
CIRI	Dara Glass

USBLM	Elijah Waters
HDR	James Brady
E-Terra	Lars G. Leitsmann
Van Ness Feldman	Jonathan Simon
Mat-Su Mayor	Larry DeVilbiss
Hydropower Reform Coalition	Jan Konigsberg
ADF&G	Joe Klein
Tetra Tech	Rob Plotnikoff
Knikatnu, Inc.	Tom Harris
Tetra Tech, Alaska	Christy Miller
NLUR	Peter Bowers
NMFS	Sue Walker
ADF&G	Mark Willette (by phone)
USFWS	Betsy McCracken
Mat-Su Borough	Larry DeVilbiss (by phone)
State of Alaska, AG's Office	Brian Bjorkquist (by phone)
HDR	Michael Barclay (by phone)
R2 Resource Consultants	Dudley Reiser (by phone)
EPA	Jennifer Curtis (by phone)

Presentations:

- Craig Addley (Cardno-Entrix): Fish Distribution and Relative Abundance Studies
 - Synthesis of Existing Fish Data
 - Susitna River Run Apportionment
 - Chinook Salmon Presence Above Devils Canyon
 - Middle River Habitat Utilization
- Craig Addley (Cardno-Entrix): 2012 Instream Flow Study

Questions/Discussion Related to Presentations

Cardno-Entrix – Fisheries Distribution and Abundance Studies

- Question about the availability of more recent fishery studies including results of radio-tagging studies. ADF&G said their reports are on ADF&G website.
- There may be a need to retrieve more existing ADF&G data to identify key gaps.
- ADF&G described the recent radio telemetry and mark-recapture studies for sockeye salmon (2006-2010) and coho and chum salmon (2009-2012). For the sockeye fish tagging and mark-recapture project, ADF&G installed fish wheels and weirs in lakes and up the Yentna system. They also collected genetic samples beginning in 2009. There are preliminary distribution data for chum and coho from 2010 work, but 2011 efforts will yield more data soon. ADF&G will have apportionment data for the Three Rivers confluence area.



- Sockeye, coho and chum abundance, run apportionment and spawning distribution were determined from the ADF&G studies. However, the resolution of the data may not be adequate to determine habitat or channel type use within the middle Susitna River and no habitat data was collected at potential spawning sites.
- There was some comfort with information on sockeye, chum, and coho but there was a general desire for more information on Chinook and pink salmon.
- ADF&G has been collecting genetic samples of Chinook salmon in the Susitna River and its major tributaries, including Chulitna, Portage, Talkeetna, Montana, Willow, Deshka and Alexander. However, preliminary results indicate that the genetic markers are not separated enough to determine the tributary of origin.
- The Chinook salmon populations are at low-levels and perhaps the information from the 1980s is not comparable to today. Understanding the apportionment of the Chinook run and the extent of Chinook abundance above Devils Canyon is important.
- With climate change there may be a shift in run timing, about 2-weeks earlier than in the 1980s.
- Need to understand Chinook distribution/migration routes within the mainstem channel types, in addition to where they ultimately end up.
- Concern that enough Chinook may not be caught to understand distribution.
- While setting up a sonar station could take a whole year to find a good site, it may be worthwhile for the long run.
- Project operations could affect flows and number of fish passing through Devils Canyon.
- Juveniles may be a bigger data gap than adults in terms of known distribution and abundance.
- Resident fisheries are important and the Project will be looked at closely for effects on resident fish populations.
- Would like to see more data presented from 1980s, perhaps in the PAD.
- Cook Inlet beluga whales require studies addressing critical habitat and potential changes to prey species, specifically eulachon and salmon, from Project operations.

Cardno-Entrix – 2012 Instream Flow Study

- Discussion about upwelling and downwelling areas and using temperature as a tracer. Open water areas in the winter do not necessarily indicate upwelling.
- Suggest collecting surface and intragravel temperature data and pressure data with piezometers.

Kirby Gilbert, Sr. Regulatory Specialist, and Lynn Noel, Cardno-Entrix¹

¹ The notes are designed to provide a summary of conversation and the meeting was not recorded. If you feel there is an error or a correction needs to be made, contact Emily Ford at eford@aidea.org.