

Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project

River Recreation Flows and Access

2013 Executive Interview Protocol (revised DRAFT 10/10/2012)

Introduction:

Hi I'm _____ with OASIS ERM, a consulting firm located in Anchorage.

We are working for the Alaska Energy Authority on the Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project studying river recreation resources in the Susitna River area. We are contacting agencies, commercial providers, organizations, and individual users to get a better sense of river recreation use patterns on the Susitna River. We would like to conduct an interview with you. Is now a good time or can I schedule a time that is more convenient?

Before we start I would like to read you a brief description of the project.

This survey is part of a study to determine river recreation use patterns, access and flow preferences for three river reaches on the Susitna River. The Alaska Energy Authority is studying the feasibility of building the Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project. The proposed Project would be located on the Susitna River roughly 86 river miles upstream from Talkeetna and approximately 34 miles upstream of the Devils Canyon rapids. As currently envisioned, the project would include a roughly 700-foot tall dam located below Watana Creek and would result in a 20,000 acre, 39-mile long reservoir. Project construction and operation will alter river flows in the Susitna downstream. The dam and reservoir will alter downstream navigation and access.

This survey is designed to collect information on existing motorized and non-motorized river recreation opportunities using a variety of watercraft. The river has been divided into three distinct reaches: Reach 1, Denali Highway bridge to Fog Creek (RM 290 to 177); Reach 2, Fog Creek to Portage including Devils Canyon (RM 177 to 149); and Reach 3, Portage Creek to the George Parks Highway Bridge (Rm 149 to 86).

- a) First of all, can you please describe your business/organization/agency a. Areas of operation
 - a. Years in business
 - b. Services/tours provided
 - c. Membership
 - d. Other information

- 2) Do you or your [organization/business/agency] have any [knowledge/or use] of the three river recreation reaches on the Susitna River?
Can you please provide me with some background on this?
 - a) Primary trip purpose
 - b) Type of watercraft
 - c) Time of year used
 - d) Level of use (ex. heavy, light, etc.) –[look for hard numbers]

- e) Client/membership base – Anchorage? Fairbanks? Non-residents? Local area residents?
 - f) Any other information?
- 3) How and where do you access the river?
- 4) Please describe your flow preferences for:
- Transportation**
- a) From a **transportation perspective**, what is the lowest flow to **safely navigate** the channel?
 - b) What is the **optimum flow for transportation**?
 - c) What is the **highest safe flow for transportation**?
- Recreation**
- d) From a **recreational perspective** what is the **minimum acceptable flow** for this reach?
 - e) What is the **optimum recreation flow** for this reach?
 - f) What is the **highest safe flow for recreation**?
- Whitewater**
- g) For **whitewater boating in Devils Canyon**, what is the **minimum acceptable flow** for this reach?
 - h) For whitewater boating, what is the **optimum flow** for this reach?
 - i) For your watercraft and skill level, what is the best flow for a **standard whitewater trip**?
 - j) For the Devils Canyon section, what is the best flow for a **bigwater challenge trip**?
 - k) What is the **highest safe flow** for your watercraft and skill level?
- 5) Are you noticing any trends in recreational use of the area?
- a) Seasonal Changes?
 - b) Is use and interest growing?
 - c) Lessening?
 - d) About the same?
 - e) Is the mix of recreational use changing?
- 6) What types of new infrastructure might help improve river access?
Would you prefer river access not be improved? [If yes] Why?
- 7) Are there any other issues regarding river recreation use or access that we should be aware of?
- 8) Would you consider this area a unique setting for river recreation use in Alaska? Why or why not?
- 9) What other rivers with similar features to the Susitna do you use for recreational outings.

10) Are there any specific people that you think it would be important for us to include in our interview research?