



# SUSITNA-WATANA HYDRO

**Meeting Summary- Draft  
Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project Licensing  
Alaska Energy Authority Main Office  
813 West Northern Lights Blvd, Anchorage, AK**

**Recreation and Social Sciences Technical Workgroup Meeting  
October 17, 2012, 8:30 am – 4:00 pm**

**Attendees:**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>
ADF&G	Joe Giefer
ADNR-DMLW	Wendy Steinberger*
ADNR	Marie Steele
AEA	Justin Crowther
AEA	Wayne Dyok
AEA	Betsy McGregor
Ahtna	Bruce Cain
CIRI	Dara Glass
Charles M. Mobley & Associates	Chuck Mobley
Coalition for Susitna Dam Alternatives	Becky Long*
DOWL HKM	Maryellen Tuttell
FERC	David Turner*
HDR	Tracie Krauthoefer
Louis Berger Group	Lisa McDonald*
McDowell Group	Donna Logan
MWH	Sarah Callaway
MWH	Kirby Gilbert
National Heritage Institute/ HRI	Jan Konigsberg*
Newfields	Gary Krieger
Newfields	Kathe Boucha
NLUR	Justin Hays*
Northern Economics	Pat Burden
Northern Economics	Don Schug*
Northern Economics	Jonathan King
NPS	Cassie Thomas
NPS	Harry Williamson*
SHPO	Richard Vanderhoek
URS	Patti Kroen*
URS	Bridget Easley
URS	John Gangemi*
URS	Louise Kling*
URS	Tim Kramer
URS	Amy Rosenthal*
Van Ness Feldman	Chuck Sensiba

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>
URS	Taylor Brelsford

\*By telephone

### Introduction and Meeting Overview

Kirby Gilbert (MWH) facilitated introductions and gave an overview of the meeting objectives, overall study plan schedule and updates on the Susitna-Watana Project engineering studies and facilities plans. The objective of the meeting was described to be a meeting to update parties on the status of social sciences revised study plans, focusing specifically on responses to comments received (to date) on the July 14<sup>th</sup> study plans, and any outstanding, or unresolved issues. The overall Integrated Licensing Process (ILP) study plan schedule was presented.

Kirby described how the revised study plans (RSP) are going to include interdisciplinary interdependency charts, to graphically depict how outputs from some studies are necessary inputs for others.

Cassie Thomas (NPS) expressed a general frustration with AEA and consultants mentioning dates for having documents available for review, but then not always having them available as hoped. Regarding the upcoming revised study plan, Cassie noted she would need the draft RSP by 10/25/2012, so she could use it to prepare her comments on behalf of the NPS, due to her travel schedule.

### Transportation, Air Quality and Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

Maryellen Tuttell (DOWL HKM) presented an update to the transportation study plans. Few comments have been received to date, but those the study team have received to date focused on: 1) how to document existing river use for transportation, and 2) how to get useful information from local landowners or others in the area knowledgeable about local transportation use. Those considerations are addressed in the revised study plan. Some of the information that will be used in the transportation analysis will come from the other studies (e.g. recreation).

No comments were received on the air quality study to date, but the study team has reached out to EPA and ADEC staff, who indicated they would take a look at the PSP to see if they had any comments.

Gary Krieger (Newfields) presented the status of the HIA study plan. He described how the health-related data comes largely from the other technical studies, to avoid duplication and maximize efficiency in data collection. There are some health-related questions integrated into the subsistence study surveys. Field data gathering for the HIA, specifically, is typically minimal. The Social Goods and Services study can perhaps help with demographic information such information about consumer-durable assets in by household, as these kinds of statistics can be predictive of wealth quintiles; which, in turn, are related to health. Gary described that there is often a time lag between regulatory standards and the “science of today.” But standards are standards, and that is what is used in the HIA analyses. From a health perspective, particulates (PM<sub>2.5</sub> particularly) are a focus.

## Regional Economics and Socioeconomics Studies

Pat Burden (Northern Economics) – Pat went over the major comments received to date as outlined in the posted comment response table. Pat noted that the NPS has requested a full accounting of Project-related impacts on the social environment. Some effects are not quantifiable, and limited to qualitative discussion, and thus will rely heavily on surveys. Additionally, in response to a comment that noted there are some potentially, directly affected residents along the Alaska Railroad north of Chase, a “railroad community” has been added to the study area to try and characterize this community of people and possible effect mechanisms resulting from development of the Project.

Pat also noted that there were a few comments on survey methodologies and reviews. The study team has prepared draft protocols for the executive interview surveys which will be conducted, and the team with AEA still needs to decide about other surveys and if a Random utility model (RUM) will be used.

Lisa McDonald (Louis Berger Group) asked for definition of “knowledgeable person” to be included, and also explanation of how the organizations/persons will be selected for interviews. Pat noted that the list of persons and basic criteria will be in the Revised Study Plans.

Bruce Kane (Ahtna) asked if the studies assume there will be an intertie transmission line between the Susitna-Watana Project and the Copper Basin. If not, it could be an important consideration to evaluate. Bruce noted that power costs are three to five times higher in the Copper Basin than elsewhere in the Railbelt. Wayne Dyok (AEA) stated that the feasibility and cost of the intertie is being investigated as an independent effort within AEA; but at this time such an intertie transmission line is not part of the Susitna-Watana Project. Wayne suggested a follow-up meeting between Ahtna and Sara Fisher-Goad of AEA.

Pat noted that the effects of an intertie could be discussed in the cumulative effects analysis within the license application and FERC NEPA analysis. But right now, the population of the Copper River valley is not part of the socioeconomics study area. Study areas are those which will receive the power benefit of the Project (i.e. the Railbelt).

Wayne Dyok (AEA) noted that the RUM model is very costly, and data intensive. He went on to say that AEA is currently looking at how the information that might come out of the model would be used in decision making. Wayne discussed that AEA wants relevant information related to understanding the baseline but is interested in the type of information that really helps understand potential Project impacts and is most usefulness in decision making. AEA is determining what level of analysis is appropriate and has not made a final decision on the use of the RUM model at this time, and it will not be reconciled by the time the draft Revised Study Plans are posted next week. It will be reconciled by the 12/14/2012 deadline for filing the RSP.

Cassie Thomas (NPS) asked how the power- and non-power uses of the river will be balanced without fully understanding its economic value. David Turner (FERC) replied that putting an economic value on resources (like a dollar of energy equals x amount of fish habitat) is difficult and so the analysis may need to be more qualitative in some instances.

Lisa McDonald (Louis Berger Group) stated that the RUM may not be the only option; at this point it is difficult to judge whether the RUM is the appropriate path. Jonathan King (NEI) stated that the RUM model is very data intensive. It requires an understanding of where people are going and why, and over a period of time. It is also important to understand where they fit into the broader, regional picture of recreation for the whole population. The RUM is powerful because it incorporates data that is collected from the individuals using the area, while they're using it, over a period of time. Also the RUM output helps to understand how distance, site attributes, trip experiences all fit together, and the tradeoffs that individuals are making compared to recreational site choices. The RUM can give a "picture" of recreation in the study area in the context of the broader choice of recreational opportunities and choices, beyond the Railbelt. The RUM can also help inform choices on Project road corridors based on recreation attributes, not just how the different alternatives might affect users.

### Subsistence Study

Tracie Krauthoefer (HDR) presented information on updates to the subsistence study plan. She noted that not many comments have been received to date. As with other social sciences studies they were asked by FERC in previous meetings to include survey instruments, so those have been added. The other comments that the study team has noted are in regards to traditional knowledge (TK) interviews and how that information could be integrated into the HIA. Bruce Cain (Ahtna) stated that it will be important to have elders in the TK interviews. Tracie noted that the interviewees are selected by the community working with the study team.

Tracie reviewed the subsistence study schedule, which begins in January 2013. She noted for Bruce that household surveys for Copper River communities will be conducted in the first quarter of 2014 but TK interviews will actually occur in first quarter of 2013. The 10-year mapping studies will be conducted in first quarter of 2014.

### Recreation, River Flow, and Aesthetic Studies

Bridget Easley (URS) provided an update on the status of the recreation and aesthetic studies. She noted that over 100 comments were received. She summarized some of the main comments as follows:

- There were comments about the need to identify interdependencies with other disciplines and timing of results so they can be used by other disciplines
- Comments regarding the timing of surveys and study implementation with respect to the desire for participants review and input during the study process. Bridget noted that the draft RSP now makes note of how the study team expects the technical workgroup meetings to continue and plan to meet quarterly to get input and reviews of study progress.
- There were comments about the study areas along with recommendations for adjustments that have been mostly incorporated into the updated study plan.
- There were comments about the survey methodology and survey instruments. Bridget noted the survey is planned to consist of 10,000 mail out surveys to Alaska residents and coupled with the intercept survey program and executive interviews

- Dara Glass (CIRI) inquired about who the surveys would be sent to. She noted that as a majority landowner, CIRI is very concerned about who will be included in the survey, as well as potential trespass issues. Donna Logan (McDowell Group) stated that the (mail) survey will include a random sample from voter registration lists. For the intercept survey, there are several locations (e.g. Parks Highway, Denali Highway, Talkeetna). These are directly targeting area users across all seasons, so it could be Alaska residents or visitors.
- Cassie Thomas (NPS) noted that if the Project moves forward, it is assumed that there will be a recreation management plan and that could be a means to help manage trespassing issues (using the information gathered from the surveys).
- There were questions about how the study team will select key observation points and soundscapes in the Aesthetics study.
- There were also some comments related to making sure the studies addressed the quality of experience in addition to the quantitative information being gathered with respect to recreation uses.

Bridget noted that the revised study plan includes a draft boating survey. John Gangemi (Oasis) stated that the October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 meeting resulted in a revised survey instrument that includes recreation reaches 1, 2 and 3. The draft survey is currently a bit little lengthy and may be revised. He noted this is not intended to be a random survey because the user group is so small, it will need to be “pushed onto” as many users as possible based upon word of mouth and networking.

### Cultural Resource Study

Chuck Mobley (Charles M. Mobley & Associates) provided an update to the cultural resources study plan. He noted the comments and revisions mostly centered on the definitions/extent of the preliminary direct and indirect areas of potential effect (Direct and Indirect APE).

Chuck noted after many meetings and much collaboration the Direct APE is focused on what it proposed as the Project “footprint” including the impoundment area up to elevation 2,075 feet. It also is to include the Watana Dam construction site as well as the Chulitna, Denali and Gold Creek access/transmission corridors.

Chuck described the Indirect APE as the area just outside of direct APE in areas that may experience Project-induced recreational or other increased human activity, such as: existing trails, ATV trails and popular hunting areas as well as areas determined to be of high cultural resource potential that are near the trails, recreational areas, or areas near or related to known cultural sites.

The basic premise for defining the indirect APE is that areas that have seen historical use are more likely to see future use possibly increase with the Project in place and areas of higher cultural site density can be more easily impacted than areas with lower cultural site density.

Chuck presented revised maps. Wayne Dyok (AEA) recommended that 1980s mass wasting data be utilized to help identify locations around the reservoir susceptible to disturbance.

Regarding study interdependencies, Chuck stated that a lot of data will be collected in the cultural resource studies, but not a lot of it will be “distributed” to other study areas. Most of the other studies do not need the detailed cultural resources information, and much of the information collected will be restricted from distribution.

Bruce Kane (Ahtna) stated that Ahtna’s elders could be valuable in implementing this study plan, as they have lived an annual migratory lifestyle. He noted that it may save some work on radio collaring wildlife by gathering anecdotal information directly from native elders who know wildlife migration patterns. This could also help narrow down locations, or potential locations, for cultural sites. Dara Glass (CIRI) stated that CIRI elders have this type of valuable information as well. It was noted that this information would also be used for the wildlife and subsistence studies. Tracie Krauthoefer (HDR) noted that elders would likely be interviewed in the TK interviews associated with the subsistence study plan.

#### Action Items

- Air quality – add modeled emissions to interdependencies chart
- Update the river boating survey instrument to reduce length
- Regional Economics & Socioeconomics
  - Revise draft survey instruments
  - Pat Burden (Northern Economics) – define knowledgeable persons criteria
  - Determine if the RUM or benefit transfer method will be included in the RSP.
- Fix a small edit need on the Cultural resources comment response table where “ANILCA” should be “ANCSA”.