

Meeting Summary
Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project Licensing
AEA Project Offices, First Floor Conference Room
411 W 4th Avenue, Anchorage, AK

Recreation and Social Sciences Survey Meeting
September 20, 2012, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Attendees:

Organization	Name
ADF&G	Joe Giefer
ADF&G	Davin Holen
AEA	Wayne Dyok
AEA	Nick Szymoniak
AEA	Betsy McGregor
Alaska HIA	Paul Anderson*
BLM	John Jangala*
BLM	Cory Larson
Center for Water Advocacy	Harold Shepherd
DOWL HKM	Maryellen Tuttle
FERC	David Turner*
FERC	Ken Wilcox*
HDR	Tracie Krauthoefer
The Louis Berger Group	Lisa McDonald*
McDowell Group	Donna Logan
McDowell Group	Bob Koenitzer
MWH	Kirby Gilbert*
Natural Heritage Institute/ HRI	Jan Konigsberg
Northern Economics	Pat Burden
Northern Economics	Jonathan King
NPS	Cassie Thomas
NPS	Harry Williamson*
SRB&A	Steve Braund
SRB&A	Liz Sears
URS	Bridget Easley
URS	Tim Kramer
URS	Louise Kling*
URS	Mark Storm*
ERM	John Gangemi*
NOAA	Scott Miller*
Resident	Becky Long*
ADNR	Dave Griffin*

*by telephone

Introduction and Meeting Overview – Wayne Dyok (AEA)/Kirby Gilbert (MWH)

Kirby provided an overview of the recreation and social sciences study planning process from release of the PSP on July 16th through the current phase of study plan revision. He also provided an overview of the agenda, which is focused on surveys and survey instruments along with interconnections to other studies, and he noted that the August 8th meeting minutes had been posted..

Recreation Survey Planning

Donna Logan (McDowell) provided an overview of the surveys planned through the recreation studies. Donna outlined the three categories of surveys; 1) incidence observation survey form; 2) Intercept Surveys (w/Online component/option); and 3) Mail Survey (with telephone component). Donna went on to describe the Project area and the study areas including a study area for the intercept survey. The area is generally bordered by the Parks highway, Denali highway, Richardson highway and Glennallen highway.

Cassie Thomas (NPS) expressed interest in having more intercept survey sites on the lower Susitna River that could be affected and suggested that it would be prudent to collect seasonal information on users and use patterns in the river areas, especially related to angling use but also river flow changes and possible ice changes. She suggested that perhaps more emphasis could be given to survey and evaluate recreation downstream of Talkeetna in the Susitna River corridor and perhaps less along the Richardson Highway. Bob (McDowell) explained the stratified random access rationale for the various intercept locations.

Scott Miller (NOAA) noted that NOAA Fisheries is interested in Essential Fish Habitat and associated recreation changes to the river downstream of Talkeetna. Scott also mentioned boaters and users might go up the Susitna River from Cook Inlet, departing from Anchorage possibly, and that it would be important to capture these forms of recreation in the intercept survey.

There was further discussion about the Intercept survey sites. Cassie (NPS) suggested basing the intercept survey area using information from other resource study areas such as what anticipate effects might occur in ice processes, river flow, and fish. . Following on this, there was some discussion that perhaps popular gas stations and the larger boat ramps would be good places to pick up survey respondents. There was also discussion of the use and merits of using the Statewide Angler surveys and freshwater guide log books. Scott cautioned use of the Statewide Angler survey may introduce potential bias. However, AEA's consultant's thought that the survey data would be sufficient for the intended use. Kirby (MWH) emphasized the importance of characterizing the regional recreational environment, including those beyond the immediate project area, to understand use and establish context and the potential displacement of recreational use.

Becky Long (Talkeenta Resident) asked about how we will get at river transportation uses. Tracie (HDR) stated that there will be a separate resident subsistence survey that includes

questions related transportation uses. It was discussed that the subsistence survey and the recreation surveys will contribute to the efforts in the transportation study attempting to characterize the transportation uses of the river corridor. Scott Miller (NOAA) expressed support for using the Whistle Stop train stops to undertake the surveys.

Bob (McDowell) summarized the details of the Intercept Survey including timing, logistics, anticipated response numbers, the rationale behind intercept site selection, key recreational groups, and the methodology to be used to ensure a stratified random sampling. There will be three sampling periods centered on based on seasons (i.e., winter starting late February 2013, June-August peak summer use, and the fall hunting period). Some discussion occurred on additional methods and instruments (postcards on vehicle windows, polling at internet forums, and focus groups) that could be utilized and the pros and cons of each.

Donna went on to explain that the Intercept Survey will likely serve as the basis for the mailing survey, but there are practical questions that change. A post card mail out survey will include a map that is easier to understand than if we were surveying by telephone and an invitation to a website. Location data collected will help determine the location of use areas, activities and the intensity of use. There was discussion of the need for potentially providing some incentives, something like participants being entered in a contest for a lodge stay, or gift certificate for a sporting goods store. Wayne Dyok (AEA) agreed to look into AEA's procurement rules to see what is permitted.

For winter surveys there was mention of going to a highly used location, like Turnagain Pass as we might find some of those users recreate in the Susitna River valley. A key goal of the recreation surveys is to get a better understanding of recreation demand. Jan Konigsberg (NHI) suggested linking the survey on other sites such as dog mushing or snowmobile sites, but it was noted that this would introduce bias in the survey.

Harry Williamson (NPS) asked if the licensing participants can help review the data once it is collected. There was some discussion of what might be in the Initial Study Report to be completed in early 2014 and if there would be time to have analysis of the survey results or just reporting of the results. The report will summarize the data collected but the analysis of the data will take more time. In response to a request from Joe Giefer (ADF&G), Wayne (AEA) said that it may be possible to provide data before the report, but only after the data has gone through a quality control review.

Donna explained more about the mail out survey, which would have about 10,000 mailings, likely in two batches of 5,000. This survey will help get at resident's uses of the area, not just limited to recreation uses. A short telephone survey (400 individuals) would occur following the mail survey to test for level of bias.

Donna also emphasized the need to limit the length and number of questions on both the intercept and mail surveys for practicality, given a respondent will become impatient if the survey is too long. Questions will need to be focused and limited in extent. Other methods of

collecting data should be explored if possible. In response to a question about the use of focus groups, Donna noted that a focus group is not planned for the recreation study.

Discussion then turned more toward process and Cassie (NPS) expressed interest in further developing a communication protocol perhaps or something that would help agencies know or track what changes are being made to the study plans, or how and when participants could review and contribute to the final products, outside of the formal comment periods. Ken Wilcox (FERC) also suggested that AEA provide more clarity on its process to prepare the revised study plans. David Turner (FERC) emphasized that this informal comment period is intended to help find resolutions and identify areas of agreement and disagreement, rather than for participants to merely comment on the Proposed Study Plan. Jan (NHI) suggested that AEA prepare a table that reflects points of agreement and disagreement. Wayne (AEA) agreed to consider confer with the AEA team to see how AEA might best identify agreements and disagreements.

Kirby (MWH) mentioned that each of the 58 study plans have their own process as each has various needs for updates and revisions, but suggested that at each meeting, we could start by going over the comments and revisions we are or have made to the study plans. He also suggested that the Recreation Study many need more structure given the number smaller of items relating to it and that for future meetings, materials could be made available prior to the meeting.

Socioeconomic Study Plan

Pat (NEI) provided an overview of efforts to assess socioeconomic impacts and NEI's efforts to coordinate with McDowell on the survey to collect information on spending activities. He noted that quality of life will be considered in the socioeconomic study teams contributions to the recreation survey, as well as in the subsistence survey.

Jonathan King (NEI) discussed the socioeconomic survey aspects regarding the expenditure information the McDowell group is intending to help collect in their surveys as well as social welfare information that will help inform the use of other modeling. Jonathan discussed the use of a Random Utility Model (RUM) that may potentially be used to assess the economic impact of the top four or five recreational activities within the study area. The RUM was added in response to comments on the PSP. If developed using appropriate variables, the RUM would enable modeling of the economic impacts of current and new site development. Cassie (NPS) expressed interest in the model but emphasized the importance of including future management regimes and different planning scenarios.

Dave Griffin (ADNR State Parks) explained he had not participated previously but was glad to join the workgroup and mentioned several items of possible interest that State Parks has been doing in the upper Susitna River Valley. Dave described they are working on developing a new visitor center in Denali State Park, but do not have all the funding yet, however are planning on developing a camping area (55 sites) near MP 135 on the Parks Highway. He also mentioned they had done a feasibility study with some visitation information he could pass along. In addition, they will be extending three-phase power supply up the highway from MP 101 to MP

121 and have plans to further extend three-phase power to MP 135 and then onto the Princess Lodge. Wayne Dyok (AEA) gave Dave his contact information so Dave could send along the reports and information which Wayne then could pass onto the study team. Dave also recommended working with the Alaska Railroad for surveying along the Whistle Stop train.

River Flow Study Plan

John Gangemi (ERM) went over the river flow study plan surveys in terms of what was planned for each of the three river reaches defined in the study plan(i.e., upstream of Watana, Watana to Portage Creek and Portage Creek to the confluence). John described the targeted interview method, along with an online survey for boaters and how the surveys are trying to get at flow preferences and frequency of use among other things. John agreed he could provide copies of draft or typical survey instruments to the participants in the next few weeks. Cassie (NPS) again mentioned the need to understand river use patterns, river uses downstream of Talkeetna if flows, winter ice, or fisheries are going to be affected by the Project. John noted that for summer effects, he can apply the information gained from the reach upstream of Talkeetna to the reach downstream.

Aesthetics Study Plan

Louise Kling (URS) briefly described the aesthetics study survey components. It was agreed she would have more materials for review prior to the next technical focus group meetings on recreation and aesthetics, including sound and methods/locations of tentative information collection points, etc. Mark Storm was introduced as the lead for the Sound assessment. The aesthetics study may piggy back on the time lapse cameras set up for the ice studies and cross sections.

The meeting concluded that more follow up discussion would occur and Cassie was going to do a Doodle Poll to confirm when a follow up meeting on the surveys could take place in the next few weeks. It was mentioned that for those that cannot participate in some follow up meetings or conversations, the study teams could recap at the scheduled October 16th TWG what changes they have made to the study plans and the result of the smaller meetings.

Action Items

- Evaluate adding more Intercept survey sites in Lower River locations and perhaps cutting back a little on Richardson Highway locations/effort to make the adjustment.
- Consider the merits of evaluating Susitna River bound boaters departing from Anchorage as potential survey locations and follow up to evaluate significance/extent of such use.
- AEA to consider if there is a potential gap in the mail survey for out of town land owners.
- AEA to consider obtaining debriefs from AEA's helicopter pilots travelling in the project area.
- Coordinate with Subsistence and Transportation studies on segmenting transportation uses of river verses recreation uses of the Susitna River.

- Wayne Dyok to follow up on AEA procedures regarding potential use of incentives in survey.
- Consider the potential of using popular day use areas for survey sites like Turnagain Pass (for snow-machiners) to survey a group who may have some familiarity with use in the upper Susitna River basin.
- Outline the likely extent of survey results reporting in the first year report (Initial Study Report due out Feb. 3, 2014) and consider a process to allow licensing participants to review survey data prior to analysis.
- AEA to consider producing a table to outline the process for working with licensing participants to review study plan changes prior to finalizing for RSP December 14th (and prior to comment close November 14th).
- John Gangemi to provide example or tentative Online and Executive Survey instruments by end of next week.
- Tracie to send John Gangemi a list of subsistence survey locations so he can determine if additional questions should be added to facilitate the river flow study.
- Tracie to post the subsistence survey online.
- Louise Kling to provide more details on KOP selection and any survey instruments or focus group plans within the next week.
- Follow up with Cassie on scheduling a small focus group session in next couple weeks to further go over the survey plans, consider adding Aesthetics and Noise survey plans, work with Betsy and Kirby to schedule this meeting.