



# SUSITNA-WATANA HYDRO

## Meeting Notes Cultural Resources Technical Workgroup Meeting November 7, 2013

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

**TIME:** 1:00 p.m. – 2:55 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** 2013 Quarter 4 Cultural/Paleontology Study Program Update

**GoTo MEETING:** <https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/657873399>  
1-800-315-6338 Code 3957#

**Goal:** Brief Licensing Participants on Progress of Cultural and Paleontological Resources Studies

**ATTENDEES:** Shina duVall ADNR/OHA, Richard VanderHoek ADNR/OHA, Julie Anderson AEA, Betsy McGregor AEA, Catherine Thompson Alexander Creek, Inc., Ricky Hoff BIA, John Jangala BLM, Charles Mobley Charles M. Mobley & Associates, Dara Glass CIRI, Tracie Krauthoefer HDR, Fran Seager-Boss Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Kirby Gilbert MWH, Heather Williams MWH, Justin Hays NLURA, Burk Neely NLURA, Chuck Sensiba Van Ness Feldman

**ON PHONE:** Kathryn Martin Ahtna, Inc., Jennifer Curtis EPA, Deirdre Remley RUS, Michael O’Connell Stoel Reeves/CIRI, Whitney Wolff Talkeetna Community Council

This was the fourth 2013 quarterly cultural resources Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting. 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.

Following introductions and a brief overview regarding overall project status, presentations were made on the following studies:

- Archaeological Investigations;
- Ethnogeographic Studies; and
- Paleoenvironmental Investigation.

### **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 cultural resources milestones and meetings are as follows:

- 2/3/14 ISR FERC submittal
- 2/13/14 Cultural Resources ISR and first quarter 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 Cultural Resources second quarter 2014 TWG meeting

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

### **Archaeological Investigations (Justin Hays NLURA)**

AHRS forms are being completed for known and new sites based on the Alaska Field Archaeologic Permit to undertake cultural resources investigations on state and federal lands. It is an intensive effort currently occupying about 11 staff. Team expects to submit approximately 1000 pages of documentation to SHPO before the 180-day reporting requirement of March 1, 2014.

2013 was primarily an inventory effort rather than a collection phase. However, some artifacts were collected.

Preliminary radiocarbon date ranges include 7500 years before present, 5000-5500 years before present and 1300-1500 years before present, consistent with data from the 1980s studies. The 1980s radiocarbon analyses were based on limited laboratory capabilities as compared to today. Current radiocarbon samples are being split and sent to two labs - Beta Analytic in Florida and the University of Georgia (relatively new lab being run by a former Smithsonian expert) - to help eliminate lab bias. Hundreds of radiocarbon samples are likely to be submitted over the course of the two field seasons.

Tephra (volcanic ash) samples have been sent very recently to University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and Alaska Volcano Observatory (AVO). Results are expected in about a year.

Obsidian source analysis was conducted by UAF and NLURA experts. Small sample size to date indicates somewhat similar but statistically distinct geochemistry to that of the well-known Batza Tena source in the distant Koyokuk River watershed. An uninvestigated obsidian source on the more proximate Glass River in the Talkeetna Mountains was mentioned as a possible source. AEA is evaluating whether site investigation of the Glass River potential source is pertinent to project study goals.

Surface fossil finds, including a possible digging stick, will inform the paleontology work.

The predictive model appears to be performing well. Current model runs do not rely on 1980s data as input. Recent findings will be compared with model predictions in the next model run date, approximately January 31<sup>st</sup>. The model has also been split seasonally to increase accuracy. Geographic stratification has been a side benefit of lack of access to certain lands.

Project team found that ice patches serve as fresh water sources in the alpine areas, supporting animals and activities not typically associated with elevations of 4000' or more. Rock cairn dating may benefit from lichen analyses.

Some historic inventory work took place this year, including Jay Creek. More historical investigation will take place in 2014, and will be done by a specialized historic resources team.

The unanticipated discoveries process yielded two reports by other field crews that turned out to be known sites. Process is working well.

In some follow-on discussion of the work process, it was noted that it is not likely that evaluations regarding sites with potential for National Registry listing will take place until fall or winter 2014 when all of the field data has been collected. It was also noted that sites discovered after the license application has been submitted could be handled in the Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP). Typically the Programmatic Agreement (PA) is the legally binding document that includes the detailed and project-specific HPMP by reference. It is anticipated that development of the HPMP will begin early in the process, and that there is significant flexibility available to accommodate project-specific needs. The HPMP will also contain procedures for reviewing and, as appropriate, adjusting provisions over the course of a long-term license period.

Major milestones for sharing information with the public include the February 2014 ISR, the February 2015 USR and the license application. There was discussion of how important and useful it could be to develop public brochures or other interpretive materials as mitigation measures for cultural resource disturbances.

#### **Ethnogeographic Studies (Charles Mobley Charles M. Mobley & Associates, Justin Hays NLURA )**

The ethnogeography lead, **Bill Simeone** URS, was unable to attend the meeting so others presented the topic.

Work is continuing with Jim Carrey on both archival and contemporary linguistics analyses. Ethnogeography information is being included in a comprehensive cultural resource background section of the ISR, rather than as a stand-alone item at the end of the document. Examples such as Arrow Cave and Slow-Moving Creek were mentioned to illustrate the cross-disciplinary utility of the ethnogeographic information. Trail and route information is also proving helpful. Cantwell appears to be the center of the cultural landscape. The primary goal of this work is still to determine whether there are items that can lead to TCP designation.

2013 work has focused on Ahtna history. A Dena'ina ethnogeography study is planned for 2014, pending arrangements being made by AEA and the Cook Inlet Region Working Group.

#### **Paleoenvironmental Investigation (Justin Hays NLURA)**

Paleoenvironmental program is being conducted mostly by UAF researchers, in 2014. Only planning activities have occurred in 2013, and they will be documented in the upcoming ISR. Lake coring is still expected to take place in April 2014, with adjacent terrestrial cores to be taken in summer. Lake selections are ongoing from amongst those with existing ADF&G bathymetry, prioritizing those with sites adjacent.

#### **Action Item**

#### **Responsibility**

The study team is requested to reference the Cook Inlet Region Working Group (CIRWG) instead of CIRI or individual village corporations when discussing the Cook Inlet Region group as a whole.	All
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