



# SUSITNA-WATANA HYDRO

## Meeting Notes Social Sciences Technical Workgroup Meeting June 12, 2013

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

**TIME:** 8:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** Quarterly Status of 2013 Studies

**GoTo MEETING:** <https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/999000951>  
1-800-315-6338 Code 3957#

**Goal:** Brief Licensing Participants on Progress and Plans for implementation of Recreation, Socioeconomic, Air, Subsistence and Health Impact Analysis Studies

**ATTENDEES:** Mark Fink ADF&G, Joe Giefer ADF&G, Hannah Johnson ADF&G, Bronwyn Jones ADF&G, Joshua Ream ADF&G, David Griffin ADF&G, Justin Crowther AEA, Wayne Dyok AEA, Betsy McGregor AEA, Dara Glass CIRI, Maryellen Tuttell DOWL HKM, Ellen Bechtel EPA, Tracie Krauthoefer HDR, Donna Logan McDowell Group, Kirby Gilbert MWH, Heather Williams MWH, Marci Balge NewFields, Nicole Middaugh NewFields, Jonathan King Northern Economics, Tim Kramer URS

**ON PHONE:** Becky Long Coalition for Susitna Dam Alternatives, Hal Shepherd Center for Water Advocacy, Jennifer Curtis EPA, John Gangemi ERM, Suzanne Novak FERC, Ken Wilcox FERC, Phil Devita HMMH, Steve Padula McMillen, Cassie Thomas NPS, Harry Williamson NPS, Whitney Wolff Talkeetna Community Council, Louise Kling URS, Chuck Sensiba Van Ness Feldman

This was the second quarterly social sciences interim progress 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 agenda, documents, and supporting presentations can be found on the meetings page at <http://www.susitna-watanahydro.org/>. These meeting notes are intended to supply information and significant consultation not included in the provided materials.

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

- Health Impact Assessment;
- Socioeconomic, Transportation and Air Quality;
- Subsistence;
- Aesthetics; and
- Recreation and River Flow.

**Project Status Overview (Kirby Gilbert MWH, Wayne Dyok AEA)**

58 studies have been approved by FERC and are underway over the next two years. The next formal reporting on these social science studies will be February 3, 2014 with submittal of the Initial Study Report (ISR).

Ongoing resolution of land access issues, late ice break-up and complex logistics are current challenges for all studies.

**Health Impact Assessment (Marci Balge NewFields)**

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) study is in the data collection phase. Assessment parameters follow state HIA guidance. Coordination and cross-participation with ADF&G is going very well. Ground-truthing of literature review is proving very useful for accuracy. Potential federal sequestration impacts are being considered. HIA study has not encountered any obstacles to date.

**Socioeconomics (Jonathan King Northern Economics)**

Socioeconomic study is in the data collection phase. Agency and cross-study coordination efforts are going very well. Survey returns appear to be on track to provide expected input for economic modeling. Economic modeling is dependent on other study results as well as design decisions (i.e. assumptions about construction methods, planned port use, etc.) so will not be finalized until those are completed.

**Transportation (Maryellen Tuttle DOWL HKM)**

Transportation study is in the data collection phase. Cumulative impacts of the Project combined with other potential regional projects (e.g., gas pipeline) are considered in several ways. The socioeconomic study will be preparing a list of reasonably foreseeable future assumptions (RFFAs) that will outline what other major regional projects are likely to occur and these will help define regional economic modeling and provide input into the cumulative impact assessment portion of the study and of FERC's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). FERC staff noted that the EIS process provides FERC the opportunity to consider potential non - project impacts in addition to this Project's potential impacts.

**Air Quality (Phil Devita HMMH)**

Air Quality study is collecting existing information. The Project area is "unclassified" in terms of air quality attainment and this Project would not likely change that. Most of the state is "unclassified", due to lack of monitoring station data.

**Subsistence (Tracie Krauthoefer HDR)**

Subsistence study data collection is well underway and on schedule. Knik was added to the planned TLK interview communities as requested last meeting. "Parks Hwy Households" does include Alexander Creek and other communities that were asked about last meeting. Completed workshops have had good participation. Agency and inter-study coordination is going well. An overview of agency sampling methodology was provided. Preliminary health information has been forwarded to the HIA study team. ADF&G is conducting interviews in the following communities under alternate funding mechanisms:

- Chitina (HIA team went with ADF&G)
- McCarthy (HIA team went with ADF&G)
- Kenny Lake
- Mentasta Lake
- Mentasta Pass
- Beluga
- Tyonek
- Slana
- Chistochina
- Gakona
- Copper Center

**Aesthetics (Louise Kling URS)**

Aesthetics study team has collected some on-the-ground baseline data in permitted areas, and conducted some helicopter recon work, to help focus permitting requests, in the airspace above areas where permits have not yet been obtained. Dara expressed concern over the safety of the hovering height of the helicopters. Some discussion ensued regarding whether the May 2013 data can be considered “typical” spring due to the late break-up. There was discussion about whether to filter out high-study-use areas completely for the sound study, or whether to document and utilize the detailed logistics records that will exist (including Spider track logs from Project aircraft) in order to filter out study noise while still obtaining pertinent sound data from high-value locations, such as Gold Creek and Chulitna. Min-Metals Group (MMG) is planning helicopter flights in the area related to mining explorations. Questions were brought up about the soundscape data and if it will be used to identify species presence. It was noted that the Aesthetics team is not determining species, they are providing raw data to biology teams and ADF&G per data sharing agreement, if desired. Terrestrial biology team is relying on their own wood frog monitors and surveys which they are conducting to determine the presence of wood frogs, which will be discussed in the upcoming terrestrial resources TWG meeting. Aesthetics team is working with Denali State Park personnel. They are not yet working with Denali National Park personnel, but would be interested in doing so.

AEA is in touch with the military regarding their EIS for expanded military fly-over use of portions of the study area. There are potential safety implications for project personnel flights, as well as potential cumulative impact assessment data needs.

**Recreation (Tim Kramer URS, Donna Logan McDowell Group)**

Recreation study is underway. In-person intercepts and surveys are both being positively received and experiencing higher-than-industry-standard response rates. Survey data quality analyses (response rates, partial survey counts, weighting, etc.) are not complete, and will be presented at a future meeting. Inter-team coordination is going smoothly. FERC and AEA clarified that a Project licensee (i.e. AEA) would be ultimately responsible for a Recreation Management Plan associated with a FERC-licensed project. However, the actual activities can be contracted out. CIRI expressed that illegal trails either not be depicted on study maps, or specifically identified as illegal. Hunting camp information is being shared with the study logistics coordinator (AES) to help minimize potential interferences with other users. Agencies and other stakeholders expressed concern that due to late break-up, there may be a recreational opportunity gap for “typical” May/Memorial Day weekend activities in the data. Agencies encouraged extending 2014 field season through May 2014 (currently scheduled through March 2014). This will continue to be considered by the study team during data analysis.

**River Flow (John Gangemi ERM)**

River Recreation Flow and Access study conducted winter interviews with good participation. Analysis and mapping are not yet complete, but it appears that trappers may use portions of Reach II in the winter. Reach II extends beyond the Devils Canyon rapids, so it is not yet clear if they are claiming winter use of Devils Canyon itself. Internet survey is undergoing pre-test and is planned to go live June 20th. CIRI said not to confront anyone who may be trespassing on their lands, but they would appreciate notes about any encounters.

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
AEA will consult with landowners regarding safety of helicopter work in airspace above CIRI and associated village corporation lands (hover height).	<b>Wayne Dyok</b> AEA
Wayne Dyok (AEA) will obtain an estimated date for the military's final flyover-expansion EIS when he next speaks to them.	<b>Wayne Dyok</b> AEA
Whitney Wolff (Talkeetna Community Council) will help connect Louise Kling (URS) with specific Denali National Park personnel who may have interest in aesthetics study participation.	<b>Louise Kling</b> URS
Louise Kling (URS) will color code the various recreation facility icons, instead of having them all green, for readability.	<b>Louise Kling</b> URS
Tim Kramer (URS) will make sure recreation team denotes authorized and unauthorized trails in the trails inventory.	<b>Tim Kramer</b> URS
Stakeholders will revisit whether aesthetics and recreation data need supplementation or special analysis methods due to atypical May conditions experienced in 2013.	
The Recreation study team will recommend an end date for the recreation river flow internet survey.	