

# RRG Final Meeting Notes

October 15, 2013 / 9:00 – Noon / Skagit Service Center, Burlington, WA 98233



## *Baker River Project License Implementation*

### **Recreation Resource Group Meeting**

#### **Final Meeting Notes**

October 15, 2013, 9:00 am – Noon

**Team Leader:** Pam Garland, PSE ([pamela.garland@pse.com](mailto:pamela.garland@pse.com))

**Facilitator:** Lyn Wiltse: 425-890-3613 (call if running late or if your plans to attend the meeting change)

**Website:** <http://pse.com/aboutpse/HydroLicensing/Pages/Baker-River-Licensing.aspx>

#### **PRESENT**

Pam Garland, Tom Flynn, Jacob Venard, Elizabeth Dubreuil, and Haley Edwards (by phone), Brock Applegate (WDFW), Corrina Koenig (Town of Concrete); and Lyn Wiltse, facilitator and note taker (PDSA Consulting).

**DECISIONS:** None today.

#### **2014 RRG MEETING DATES**

Feb. 25 (RRG in the AM and LEP in the PM) at the PSE Skagit Office in Burlington

June 17 (RRG only with field trip) at the PSE Skagit Office in Burlington

October 21 (RRG in the AM and LEP in the PM) at the PSE Skagit Office in Burlington

#### **NEW ACTION ITEMS**

- Pam Send out a request for proposals for RAM funding for the 2014 season (and beyond). Include the current accounting for RAM funds. Ask for input by the end of the year and make list of proposed projects to send out to all prior to the February 18 meeting.
- Pam Send final version of the Project Evaluation Process for Use of Baker SA 602 Funds to all.
- Corrina Send Pam a copy of the new Skagit County Shoreline Permitting for Town of Concrete and Lake Shannon (to review and share with Tom).
- Pam Send out draft of dispersed Recreation Plan and campground statistics by the end of the year if possible (before our Feb meeting).
- Brock Talk with Brett about how much the late start for the sockeye fishery (after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July) was much appreciated and how it would be helpful to do the same next year as well.

#### **ONGOING ACTION ITEMS**

- All In addition to the above dates, please continue to reserve the third Tuesday of each month from 9:00-11:00am for possible additional meetings or conference calls. Pam will send out an email prior to each date asking if anyone sees a need to meet.

- All Let Pam know of any updates to the contact list for your organization.
- Pam Continue to coordinate cross-resource group collaboration (e.g., I&E) – ongoing.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

We welcomed Jacob Venard to the meeting. Tom introduced him as PSE's new Licensing Program Manager. This is a new role for Jacob who has a background in fish biology. His role will include training.

## **REVIEW OF AGENDA AND MEETING NOTES**

At the June 18 meeting, the February 19, 2013 LEP and RRG notes were finalized after the meeting via email and have been posted to the PSE website. All italicized changes to the June 18, 2013 RRG notes have been approved at this meeting and can be finalized.

## **LICENSE IMPLEMENTATION / BRCC UPDATE**

Tom explained the next BRCC has been delayed until Nov. 13 in hopes that our federal employees will be able to attend. It will be held in Snoqualmie.

Highlights of other License-related activities include:

- With both the new Lower Baker FSC and the existing Upper Baker FSC up and running PSE is happy to report a new record of over 820K juvenile outmigrants this year! They anticipate a big fishery in two years.
- Unit 4 project at Lower Baker is still in commissioning. They are working through some unanticipated vibration issues. They have until October of 2014 to finish this to be in compliance with the terms of the license which means adhering to Aquatics Table 1. Until then they will continue to operate according to the Interim Protection Plan (IPP). Will then be in full license implementation with ramping rates, etc.
- Spawning beach decommissioning is well underway and on track to be finished by this November.
- Upper Baker Adult trap had 12K sockeye come through. It still has coho now.
- Aquatics/Terrestrial Resource Group will meet again Nov. 12. They will be reviewing RFPs for 2014.
- TRIG is reviewing 512 implementation procedures. PSE is currently addressing USFS concerns with the document. One of the loon platforms disappeared. They are planning to construct another for 2014. They will also be addressing signage and access issues as they do so.
- There will be a site visit tomorrow to one of the new properties they are looking at possibly acquiring. There are two issues with the property: access and a house on the property along Finny Creek.
- CRAG will meet again in November. They are continuing to work on the same projects as last reported, including the LB compound and annual monitoring.
- Skagit General Investigation (GI) - the Corps is scheduled to come out with a preferred alternative in November. Note: Dan Berentsen has been promoted to Interim Public Works Director for Skagit County.

## **BAKER LAKE MAXIMUM DAILY POOL LEVEL CHANGE**

At the last RRG meeting PSE introduced the idea of amending the UB Max Daily Pool Level Change, specifically the 6-inch rule, found in the Aquatics Table 1. Since then they have vetted this issue with

each of the resource groups. Tom explained that PSE met with the Forest Service a few weeks ago and discussions are ongoing. One of the challenges with the 6-inch rule is the lack of an accurate way to measure inflows. The constraint is only up or down 6 inches within a rolling 24 hour period. PSE was not sure they could operate in such a way to prevent frequent violations of the 6-inch constraint.

Rather than pursuing an amendment to Aquatics Table 1 (amendment to the license) to change the constraint, PSE is proposing to change the reporting requirement so they would only report a 1-foot deviation. If there are any deviations from plan it would be because inflows were off the forecast. The USFS is pleased with this approach. PSE plans to review this proposal with the ARG at their next meeting in January. The Forest Service is on board conceptually with this new approach. PSE would communicate this to FERC through their Annual Flow Implementation Report. The next season will be a good time to try out this approach. Note: The 6-inch rule would still apply. PSE would only report to stakeholders and FERC any deviations in excess of 1 foot.

#### Discussion:

- PSE has not had to run according to Aquatics Table 1 yet. They are still operating according to the Interim Protection Plan.
- The time period for this constraint is Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- PSE cannot say that past history is indicative of what they will be doing in the future since they have not yet had to operate inside the 6-inch constraint.
- It is still considered an exceedence if they violate the 6-inch rule. Instead of the rolling 24-hour period, the reporting would be based on the 24-hour period from midnight to midnight for the reporting.
- Minimum and maximum lake level variation is a 3-foot width, with 6 inches at the top and bottom so effectively they operate within a 2-foot band. Brock reminded Tom of stranding concerns. Tom responded that PSE will be operating more conservatively than they have in the past (within a much tighter band).
- In late August and early September, PSE has made best efforts to keep a recreational level lake, as they begin to do the drawdown required by the Corps for flood storage. Concerns from the Forest Service in the past have been: Horseshoe Cove and Swift Creek swim areas not being adequate and low launch levels at upper end of the lake. With the new reservoir constraints, this should no longer be an issue, as PSE will now have Baker Lake at 721 ft. elevation.

#### **DISPERSED RECREATION SITES**

Pam explained that the Dispersed Recreation Plan is in the process of being drafted by the USFS. It has to do with the dispersed sites that have been identified, especially on the far side of the lake. These are sites where accessible only if you hike or boat in. So far the Forest Service has done some surface hardening and has installed some bear resistant food containers and human waste receptacles. Pam indicated that in conversations with Ann, though the Forest may not prefer to encourage increased dispersed camp areas, they may be forced to harden additional sites, depending upon increased use and the impacts on the forest. Some new sites may need to be surveyed (cultural and terrestrial), if they are within the Project boundary. The current dispersed sites are all within the project boundary.

#### **UPDATE ON INTERPRETIVE & EDUCATION PLAN**

This item was tabled in light of the absence of USFS representatives. Debra intends to have something for the RRG to comment on by the February, 2014 meeting.

## **RECREATION SEASON REVIEW**

### **Cultural Resource Training**

About 18 people attended the training on June 27 including LEOs from USFS, WDFW, Whatcom and Skagit counties. Some PSE managers also attended the training. Unfortunately, the Sauk Suiattle were unable to attend. Elizabeth asked for feedback. How suitable / relevant/ useful was the training?

- The training was a little over their heads and could have been condensed.
- It would have been helpful to keep it active.
- It would have been helpful if the training had been more site specific and more relevant to the Baker Basin. This would include such things as what you might find, where you might find it, etc.
- Larry's piece seemed a little off topic.
- Some of the training seemed long and boring.
- Include a field trip where they could see specifics.

Elizabeth explained that they shortened the normal 3-day or week-long training which involved field training in an attempt to provide training that was useful for Baker area LEOs. They were hesitant to put sensitive sites up on the board. It is unfortunate when you are not sure how much information you can give out. Elizabeth also explained that they were not able to do one of the presentations and they had to arrange for a replacement.

CRAG members wanted to ensure that the training covered all the ARPA rules and regulations. Maybe this would be done with a handout sent out ahead of time, and then briefly discussed at the next training and then followed by a field trip at the next time. The nature of the archaeological materials up at Baker Lake is not obvious to the untrained eye. Elizabeth explained that people walk right over a lot of the items because it is hard to recognize them. The LEOs patrolling the reservoir need to know about what sites are out there so they can discourage camping in those areas. The license requires this training to be offered at least every two years. There is interest in the next training including field work.

### **Sockeye Fishery**

While the fishery was not as strong as last year, there seemed to be just as many people out in boats and filling the campgrounds as last year. People seemed to be more knowledgeable about how things worked this year and that helped things run more smoothly.

### **Campground Occupancy Levels**

Pam reported that Kulshan campground was near full through much of the peak summer months, particularly weekends. We didn't receive a report from the Forest Service. We will ask Ann to provide a report out on occupancy levels.

### **Local PSE Events**

The VIP Event and Community Celebration were well attended. Tours went well.

## **RAM FUNDING**

Pam will send out a request for a list of proposed projects for RAM funding and ask that proposals be sent to her by the end of the year. She will also distribute a copy of the final version of the Project Evaluation Process that was approved by the BRCC. She will combine these into a list and send it out for all to review prior to our next meeting. Tom suggested the list include projects further out than 2014 so RRG members can take those into consideration as well.

## **CONCERNS-POSSIBLE RAM DISCUSSIONS**

- Shannon Creek Boat launch (heavy boat use during Sockeye fishery)
- Lake Shannon Boat Launch (2nd)-Is there a chance that WDFW will be using Lake Shannon for the fishery and what would be the impacts? Suggestion of an added boat launch lane.
- Elk damage-Brock said that WDFW enforcement will no longer be responsible for elk issues but that it has been now assigned to the wildlife side of the agency. Brock asked if there was recreation connection with elk. Pam responded that the “problem” elk are largely in the lowlands and that the Project (Baker Lake and Lake Shannon) has never been affected by elk in a negative way.

## **MEETING EVALUATION**

### **Well Done:**

- Link Sys and phone worked well
- Nice not to be hurried on agenda topics
- Good exchange of information regarding the Maximum Daily Pool Level Change and recreation season

### **Do Differently:**

- Missed USFS reps

## **FEBRUARY 25, 2013 RRG MEETING TOPICS**

- WDFW Estimates of Sockeye Fishery
- Proposals for 2014 RAM Funding
  - What to address for the 2014 Recreational Season
- Update on Dispersed Recreation Plan
- Update on Draft Interpretive & Education Plan
- Suggestions for future use of RAM Funding
- Preview of 2014 Implementation Schedule
- Evaluate Meeting

## **HANDOUTS**

- June 18, 2013 RRG Meeting Notes
- Draft Meeting Agenda for October 15, 2013