

RRG Final Meeting Notes

October 21, 2014 / 9:00 – Noon / Skagit Service Center, Burlington, WA 98233



Baker River Project License Implementation

Recreation Resource Group Meeting

Final Meeting Notes

October 21, 2014, 9:00 am – Noon

Team Leader: Tony Fuchs, PSE (tony.fuchs@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

Tony Fuchs, Tom Flynn, Elizabeth Dubreuil (by phone), and Miriam Decker (PSE); Erin Uloth and Ann Dunphy (USFS); Brian Fairbanks (WDFW); Doug Chadwick (Whatcom County Sheriff's Office); Corrina Hart (Town of Concrete); and Lyn Wiltse, facilitator and note taker (PDSA Consulting).

DECISION: None today.

2015 RRG MEETING DATES

February 17 (RRG in the morning and LEP in the afternoon to prep for the Recreation season)

June 16 (RRG only, possible field trip)

October 20 (RRG in the morning and LEP in the afternoon to prep for the Recreation season)

NEW ACTION ITEMS

- Tony Send out a Doodle Poll for 2 hour RRG document refresher.
- Tony Forward the FERC Form 80 data requirements to Ann.
- Tony Set up a Recreation Monitoring teamlet.
- Elizabeth Let this group know (through Tony) when the next draft video on Concrete culture and history is ready for review so they can provide feedback before it is final.

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. Tony will send out an email prior to each date asking if anyone sees a need to meet.
- All Let Tony know of any updates to the contact list for your organization.
- Tony Continue to coordinate cross-resource group collaboration (e.g., I&E) – ongoing.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Shortly after our last meeting Irena Netik was named as the new director of Hydroelectric Resources. She has been around since the early days of the relicensing effort and has an excellent understanding of the Baker Settlement Agreement.

- Carol Gladjo is planning to retire in the next few months. We thank her for her many contributions and wish her well!

REVIEW OF AGENDA AND MEETING NOTES

The June 17, 2014 notes were finalized after the meeting via email and are posted on the PSE website.

LICENSE IMPLEMENTATION / BRCC UPDATE

Tom announced that the next BRCC meeting will be at the PSE Snoqualmie plant on October 22.

Highlights of other License-related activities include:

Lower Baker Unit 4

- Unit 4 is the new turbine that PSE built to meet the new instream flow and downramping requirements listed in Aquatics Table 1. The turbine manufacturer has identified the source of the excessive vibration on the unit as the excessive thickness of the coating on the wicket gates. Tests to confirm that this is the source of the vibration are expected through the end of the year. PSE is now conforming to both the minimum and maximum instream flow requirements listed in Aquatics Table 1. They plan to install a new turbine runner next year. The unit will be operational by October 17 of 2015.

Aquatics Resource Group (ARG)

- Over 1 million juvenile fish were transported through the Baker Project Floating Surface Collectors this season (up from 860K the prior year). Around 30K sockeye have returned this year. This is about the third highest on record. The fishery was strong this year. The coho outmigration of 96,022 was the second highest on record.
- Baker's Artificial Incubation program is very successful, allowing for egg harvest and incubation at the hatchery and planting the fry in the lake the following year.

Terrestrial Resource Implementation Group (TRIG)

- They are looking at acquiring another property on Burpee Hill for elk habitat. They have purchased almost 700 acres for elk habit, including some for wetland preservation and forest bird habitat.
- Aquatic/Riparian habitat restoration – working with SRSC to do some re-channelization of the river to help with flood issues.
- Several noxious weed treatments were completed this summer. There were also loon and bald eagle surveys.

Cultural Resource Advisory Group (CRAG)

- They are working on short documentary videos about the Baker River Project that can be viewed separately or together. These videos will be completed this year, and their intended audiences are the public at large and PSE customers. They will be posted to PSE.com and PSE's YouTube channel. They will be shared widely and Corrina reported one of the videos is on the Town of Concrete's website. They might also be played at visitor centers, the museum at Snoqualmie Falls, maybe local public television, etc. Elizabeth will send a link to the final draft of the videos so RRG members can provide feedback before they are made final.
- Video 1: "Life on the Baker River," is a PSE / Baker River system overview, including history of settlers and American Indians and a look at early Baker River fisheries.

- Video 2: “Homesteading the Baker River” is about the two dams (engineering marvels type piece), picking up the story in the 1920’s and covering the shift to electric power.
- Video 3: “Sustaining Life on the Baker River” is the roughest of the three, and is focused on eight decades of continuous improvement.

NEW REPORTING SCHEDULE

A few weeks ago, PSE sent to FERC a request to approve the new reporting schedule that was approved by all the working groups and the BRCC. There will be a 60 day document review. If PSE hears back from FERC in time, they will start the new schedule in 2015 for 2014 reports, the first of which are due in March of 2015.

FOR THE GREATEST GOOD: Mt. Baker Ranger District: Introduction

Mt. Baker – Snoqualmie National Forest

Erin walked us through a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the scope and intent of the USFS specifically with regard to the Mt. Baker / Snoqualmie Forest. The forest extends more than 140 miles along the western slopes of the Cascade Range from the Canadian border to the northern boundary of Mount Rainier National Park.

She set the context for the presentation with the following Gifford Pinchot quote:

“...when conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint for the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run.”

She further explained that in attempting to resolve these competing interests, “There is no answer. Seek it lovingly.”

Erin explained that Forest Leadership recently took a step back and asked if they were communicating the *why* of the work they do. They defined the following 4 themes:

1. Nature matters. 5000K acres, including Wild and Scenic Rivers, 2 million visitors / year including popular sites such as Heather Meadows, Artist’s Point, fishing, wilderness and backpacking opportunities, including the recreation and fishery resources at Baker Lake. They also value the government-to-government relationship and responsibility they have with the tribes in the area. The Forest Service acts as temporary stewards of this land. They are very interested in co-managing with the six tribes in the district as they have long-standing traditions here.
2. Nature provides. It provides, wood, access, mushrooms, deeper connection to a bigger idea of the world. The provision piece is clean air, water, salmon, wood, cultural connections, and jobs. Specific to the Mt. Baker / Snoqualmie Forest are large areas of wilderness, special uses, fire, Wild and Scenic River corridor.
3. Being in Community. This is, in part, how you can foster a feeling of community outside and build that connection with the outdoors. Also included is how to be in community with the various communities in Seattle, those who come down from Vancouver, and non-traditional constituents with those in Skagit Valley. There is a sustainable roads effort as timber dollars no longer pay to fund roads and other infrastructure. They are currently hosting public meetings to figure out what to do with the roads system. They are also working with outfitter and guides program this fall – evaluating the permitting system with the outfitters and guides themselves. Work with WTA and youth groups, Wild and Scenic rivers (half of the Skagit is in private ownership) – working with many folks about how best to manage the corridor – they have responsibility for this, but no authority.

4. Finding the Greatest Good is their “True North”. How do we plan for now and the future? How to best be responsive to what the public and needs and what the land needs? As for finding this balance in a sustainable way, there is no answer. “Seek it lovingly.”

Discussion:

- Open some campsites to hunters in the fall? The FS is happy to meet with hunters about how to work together to meet this need.
- Multi-use on trails: More recreationists over time? Use is increasing but not increasing per capita. There is concern about hunters, hikers, and dirt bikers sometimes sharing the same trail.
- Funding strategy? There is a different fee structure depending on the locale. All prices are set by a Resources Advisory Committee with a mix of public stakeholders. The requirements have gotten so strict, they can’t fill all of the spots on the board. They are waiting until the end of 2015 to see if the reauthorization occurs in Congress. One third of their budget is done through partners they coordinate with to get the work done.

RECREATION MONITORING PLAN

The plan is really campground centric. We need occupancy data for FERC Form 80. There will be a separate form for Upper and Lower Baker. The FS has occupancy and fee information, including party size from the concessionaire. PSE needs to get those data by the end of February, 2015. They need a 12-month picture including this season’s information if possible. Ann will be the point person on this since Carol is retiring. Ann will get the numbers to Pam and copy Tony. Tony will form a teamlet around this. The plan requires PSE to evaluate monitoring results no later than 8 years following license issuance, and annually thereafter. We will determine whether additional site development is necessary based on monitoring reports that show site use levels reaching or exceeding 60% of combined site occupancy for Horseshoe Cove, Panorama Point, Bayview, Shannon Creek, and Baker Lake Resort campgrounds during July and August for two consecutive years.

RECREATION SEASON REVIEW

Forest Service Report:

- Ann showed a photo that evoked sadness throughout the room. Lone Tree Island has a single tree which is now dead. The tree no longer serves well as a high water marker. In discussing how to address the potential of erecting a new marker, Elizabeth reminded all that Forest Management Practices or Historic Properties Management Plan need to be consulted as this is an archaeological site.
- The new FS Boat is a 24’ landing craft that has been really helpful this past season. This was purchased with combined funds. They used it to take youth leadership adventure kids across the lake. Took garbage, tools, gravel, and lumber to the far side of the lake.
- Ann reported they had a FS crew of four on duty during the weekends. One day was maintenance and the other three days were patrol and one of the patrol days was out on the lake. They also did boat counts.
- They used maintenance money to rehab Horseshoe Cove picnic tables, hazard tree falling, and log boom lighting at Fisher Creek (around the dock). They will be looking at how to add more lighting.
- They built five double-panel kiosks for I&E: Horseshoe Cove, Panorama Point, Bayview, Shannon Creek, and Baker Lake Resort. They have another kiosk that can be put on PSE property. They hope to get the first round of the *You are Here* signage complete in time for the next season. They are looking at integrating some of the messaging. Ann will coordinate efforts with Deb, Pam, Haley, and Tony to make sure the message is comprehensive, and includes Threatened and Endangered Species, etc. Aim for teamlet to meet this winter. They may consider using QR codes or some kind of technology to enhance messaging.
- They are considering a venue to deliver performances / messages at night (a more traditional way of delivering messages).

- The Forest Service transported 1080 lbs of recyclables to the transfer station. The bear-proof dumpsters are working well. There have been overflow problems on Sunday evenings. The FS is working with the concessionaire to take care of the issue.
- The sockeye fishery was down compared to last year and there was great rejoicing. They still had a peak period of a couple of weeks when the dispersed sites were hit really hard. It was difficult to keep up with the management of those sites. Crews have to dig new pit toilet sites there on nearly an annual basis. They are trying to find a way to make those toilets more sustainable.

Public Tour: PSE had a public tour in late July. There was a pretty good turnout. PSE took folks to view the fish facilities including the adult trap and the dam.

Extra Patrols: PSE offered thanks all around. The extra patrols were extremely helpful and the public has expressed appreciation for the feeling of safety and security at Baker Lake.

Dam Safety: Miriam had a booth on dam safety and its implications for the Town of Concrete: Upper Baker, Lower Baker, and West Pass Dike. The brochure will be on Skagit County's website, is already on the Town of Concrete's website, and will be on PSE's website as well. The focus is on Lower Baker as it is in closest proximity to the public. *There is one siren in the Town of Concrete, one in Grassmere, and one in Cape Horn.* They test them once a month. There are concerns that they sound similar to the fire station sirens. PSE is collecting feedback on how to move forward – either replace the sirens or use other emergency notification systems. There is also an Emergency Action Plan. PSE worked with the Town of Concrete and Skagit County to prepare an evacuation map. There was a suggestion to post evacuation route signs like they do for tsunamis along the coast.

Lower Baker Trail Construction Plan

Funding is available for construction of a trail in year 12 of license issuance. We need to have a draft plan in year 6. Tony sent the LB Trail Construction Plan out for a 30-day review. PSE will be working with the new planner at the Town of Concrete in addition to the County's planners. The dollars don't become available until 2020.

AESTHETICS PLAN

Tony explained that the main component of this plan is to screen Baker project facilities. He showed some photos of the native plantings that have recently occurred as part of this plan. They generally followed the plan with the exception of doing a setback from the road as needed to avoid underground power lines! The next plantings will be the perimeter along the pumping station by West Pass Dike.

RAM FUNDING

Panorama Point and Boat Ramp: Ann reported that engineering is at about 70% design now (necessary for NEPA). If construction occurs this year it will be this fall, at low pool or in 2015. To fund this effort we voted to move a half a year of RAM funding forward. Ann will coordinate with Carol on how to do this. They can't go to contracting without having that money in hand. Tony will work with Lisa (PSE) on this and then Pam will do the same with Carol to update the collection agreement accordingly. This will be an ongoing item. PSE just got their current round of funds last week.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR RAM FUNDING (AVAILABLE IN 2016)

- Increased monitoring for invasive species
- Updating boat ramps on Baker Lake and combining possibly with a fry planting site

MEETING EVALUATION

Well Done:

- Got out early
- Helpful to get the big picture from Erin's presentation on the Forest Service
- Nice to get the context for the work we are doing
- Good discussions

February 17, 2015 RRG MEETING TOPICS

- Plan for 2015 Recreational Season
 - How well are we prepared?
 - Any unanticipated needs / surprises?
- Update on Dispersed Recreation Plan
- Update on Draft Interpretive & Education Plan
- FS Plans for Trails
- Suggestions for future use of RAM Funding
- Review of 2015 Implementation Schedule
- Evaluate Meeting

HANDOUTS

- June 17, 2014 Final RRG Meeting Notes
- Draft Meeting Agenda for October 21, 2014