



BAKER RIVER PROJECT RELICENSE

Wildlife and Terrestrial Resources Working Group Meeting

**April 17th, 2002 (8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)
(Bring Sack Lunch)**

PSE Mount Vernon Business Office
1700 College Way, Mt. Vernon
(Call Lyn's cell # 425-444-8156)

AGENDA

Review notes/revise agenda/action items
Solution Team Update – ICD and Scoping documents
Project Effects and Interests approach
Studies Updates: Existing Studies
Teamlet reports: T6, T15, T16
T7, T15 Vegetation Mapping Updates – Methods and Timing needs
Review Existing Study Requests – Next steps?
New Study Requests (?), New Teamlet meetings?
Set agenda and confirm location for May 15th and June (?) meetings
Evaluate meeting

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FINAL MEETING MINUTES

Mission: “To develop alternative solutions and recommendations, addressing terrestrial and wildlife resource interests for the Baker River Project and its operations, leading to a settlement agreement that:

1. accurately defines and describes the existing environment in relationship to the previous environment;
2. identifies project effects (existing and proposed) leading to development of protection, mitigation, and enhancement options.”

Team Leader: Tony Fuchs, (Phone) 425-462-3553, tfuchs@puget.com

ATTENDEES:

Patrick Goldsworthy (North Cascade Conversation Council), Martin Vaughn (Biota Pacific), Bob Kuntz (National Park Service), Don Gay, Carl Corey, and Ann Risvold (USFS), Laurel Shiner (Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board), Lauri Vigue (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Tony Fuchs (Puget Sound Energy), Tom Hamer (Hamer Environmental)

SCHEDULE FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:

Note: Our regular meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month, from 8:30-2:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 2, WDFW Office, Mill Creek: Teamlet meetings

9:00 – 12:00; Analysis Species Teamlet

12:00 – 2:00; Vegetation Mapping Teamlet

Wednesday, May 15, US Forest Service Office, Mountlake Terrace (regular meeting)

Thursday, June 6, PSE Upper Baker Lodge (regular meeting, conducted in evening before field trip)

Friday, June 7, Baker Lake (field trip of wetlands on Baker Lake)

AGENDA

Mount Vernon, WA

April 17, 2002, 8:30 AM - 2:00 PM

1. Review notes/revise agenda/action items
2. Solution Team Update – ICD and Scoping documents
3. Project Effects and Interests approach
4. Studies Updates: Existing Studies
5. Teamlet reports: T-6, T15, T16
6. T7, T15 Vegetation Mapping Updates – Methods and Timing needs
7. Review Existing Study Requests – Next steps?
8. New Study Requests (?), New Teamlet meetings?
9. Set agenda and confirm location for May 15th and June (?) meetings
10. Evaluate meeting

NEW ACTION ITEMS

- Tony: Forward Don's write-up on methodology for goat habitat burn options to other team members.
- Tony: Bring historical photos to the next meeting.
- Tony: Set up photo interpretation for T7.
- Tony: Get all the list of where we are now (T4 species/habitat list)
- Tony: Convene a meeting of the T15 technical working group.
- Marty: Send notice of June field trip to Stan.
- Don: Check with Chris Madsen about elk study needs in the basin.
- Don: Type up a list of seral stage definitions to apply to the non-federal forest cover type data, and distribute to all in the group.
- Don: Prepare a presentation on the Baker Lake Trail for the next meeting.
- Lauri: Ask Chris Lawson about what information the recreation surveys can give us about recreation in the basin relative to mountain goats.
- Tom: Verify that mollusk surveys are being done in the uplands adjacent to the reservoirs.
- Ann, Laurel and Hamer Environmental: Meet to initiate the writing of the noxious weed study plan.
- T15 Technical Working Group: Establish deadline for the completion of basin vegetation mapping.
- All: Provide Tony with lists of species important to them by May 2.

REPORT ON PAST ACTION ITEMS.

- Marty purchased historic pre-Upper Baker photos from Walker and Associates. Tony has the prints.
- Tony determined the shrub references are from Johnson and O'Neil (2001)
- Tony updated the group on the progress of the T15 vegetation mapping. See discussion later in these minutes.
- The T15 technical working group has not yet met. They will meet prior to the May regular meeting.
- Don wrote up goat habitat burning options and e-mailed them to Tony.
- Tony scheduled a wetland field trip for June 12.
- Stan was not present to report on his discussions with Chris Madsen concerning elk in the basin.

SOLUTION TEAM UPDATE – ICD AND SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Initial Consultation Document (ICD) was sent out last week. Everyone in the Working Group reported receiving a copy.

Scoping Document No. 1 is due to go out to all parties by Friday of this week (April 19). The meeting schedule for review and comment on Scoping Document 1 is:

- Tuesday, May 21: Public Tour of the Baker River Project beginning at 10:00 AM
Public Meeting at Concrete High School from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM
- Wednesday, May 22: Agency Meeting at Cotton Tree Inn, Mt. Vernon from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

PROJECT EFFECTS AND INTERESTS APPROACH

Tony handed out two documents: 1) *Prioritization of Studies to Support PSE's License Application*, and 2) *Draft List of Potential Studies to Support PSE's License Application*. These two documents describe PSE's proposal to temporarily shift attention to initiating all studies necessary to satisfy the FERC and meet the requirements of NEPA. Specifically, Tony expressed a concern that we might be overlooking studies of project effects relative to the FERC recommended baseline (existing project) because we have been focusing on other interests. The first document described the process for prioritizing studies. The second document listed the studies Tony and Marty have identified to date that they think will or may need to be done.

Don noted that one of the norms for the working group is to provide documents like this in advance of the meeting so working group members could review them before the discussion. Lauri echoed the concern, and noted her responses today may be preliminary because she is reading the documents for the first time.

Don also expressed concern that Tony's proposal could lead to initiation of studies prior to final selection of the analysis species. This could lead to unnecessary studies, and use up limited financial resources. A number of working group members asked whether this proposal was in lieu of the continuing impacts analysis approach proposed by Carl. Tony clarified that the project effects studies will not be initiated before the analysis species are identified. He also said that this proposal is not an alternative to the continuing impacts analysis. PSE views the continuing impacts analysis as satisfying an interest, which will continue to be pursued in the collaborative process. The studies of project effects, on the other hand, are regulatory requirements that must be done regardless of the results of the collaborative process. There followed some discussion on whether the continuing impacts analysis is required or optional, and all agreed that was a discussion that would have to occur outside the TRWG.

There was also discussion about how the continuing impacts analysis approach would be used. Carl said that the agency caucus still wants to use the continuing impacts analysis approach to assess project effects, but they do not want to use the approach proposed by Marty for identifying potential license conditions. Carl said he would be drafting an alternative to Marty's proposal off-line.

We went through the second document (*Draft List of Potential Studies to Support PSE's License Application*) line by line. Carl suggested editing the first heading to read "Direct and Indirect New Impacts." All agreed. Tony and Marty explained that they don't currently know if there will be new project facilities (e.g., new powerhouse, fish facilities, recreation developments), but they need to have a placeholder on the list for these to make sure any necessary studies are started on time. Don suggested the

list should clearly state that existing recreation facilities are included in the analysis of ongoing (recurring) impacts. Lauri suggested that all on-going studies be listed in this document.

Lauri said she thought we are losing momentum on selecting analysis species and getting started on studies to meet the interests of the group. We decided to have a technical working group meeting to finalize the list of analysis species prior to the next full working group meeting. The technical working team will consist of Lauri, Bob Kuntz, Don, Tony, Marty and Lia Kruger. The meeting will be on May 2.

Tony noted that studies of, "Wildlife use in the fluctuation zone," would begin with reconnaissance-level surveys by Tony in 2002. The costs of these studies would not affect the overall terrestrial study budget. Tony also explained what he meant by studies of, "Land values, availability." These will be preliminary assessments of land availability for mitigation in the basin. Lauri noted the need for confidentiality in the working group once we start to discuss specific mitigation tracts, to prevent land speculation and/or inflation of land values. Lastly, Tony explained that, "Forest Practices Applications" would involve the submittal of applications to the DNR for forested tracts owned by PSE within the Project Boundary. This would be done to establish "baseline" management of these lands in the event they are considered for mitigation. It would not be done with the objective of actually harvesting the timber unless they are not used for mitigation.

STUDIES UPDATES: EXISTING STUDIES

T2: Vegetation Mapping in Project Area

Tom provided a handout stating the field data collection will be done by May 2002. No particular problems were noted.

T13 & T17: Survey of Mollusks & Amphibians

Tom provided a handout summarizing the status of both studies. Spring amphibian surveys will be completed April 19, 2002. Northwestern salamander and red-legged frog egg masses have been found. Filling of Lake Shannon made it difficult to follow the fate of some egg masses, as they were flooded and could not be relocated due to the high water. The mollusk surveys will be completed May 2, 2002. Don noted that the handout stated the mollusk surveys are being done in the fluctuation zone, while the study plan called for the surveys to be done above the fluctuation zone. Tom will check to see if this is a typo in the report.

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP REPORTS

T6: Noxious Weed Assessment and Control Program

The technical working group met to develop additional guidance on how the noxious weed study should be done. Ann sent this information to Tom and Tony. Tom's group should now be able to complete the study plan. Ann, Laurel and Erin (Hamer Environmental) will meet to begin work on the writing of the study plan.

T16: Project Area Rare Plant Survey

Ann has reviewed about half of the latest draft of the rare plant study plan prepared by Hamer Environmental. She says it is really close to being what she wants to see, and needs just a few edits. Ann will meet with Erin at Hamer Environmental to go over the edits, and Erin will then prepare a final draft study plan for review by the full working group. Tony provided Ann with maps of the dispersed

recreation sites identified by the Recreation Working Group. She will use this map to help determine the appropriate survey area for rare plants.

T15 Basin Vegetation Mapping

The technical working group did not meet as planned. Tony did meet with Joetta (R2 resources), however; and he provided the full group with an update on her progress. Joetta obtained information on forest stand age and species composition (dominant trees) for Crown Pacific lands around Lake Shannon. She is attempting to convert this information into a format consistent with the USFS data for the rest of the Baker River Basin. Tony asked the group for input on how Joetta should classify the forest cover types in the Crown Pacific data. Don said she should use the cover types in Appendix A of the T15 study plan. Tony wasn't sure whether the Crown Pacific data could be converted to the types in Appendix A, but he will check with Joetta. He knows she can identify overstory type (conifer vs. hardwood), but he does not know if she can determine seral stage. Tony will have Joetta prepare draft maps for the technical working group to review. Joetta has also obtained information about forest stand conditions on DNR lands around Lake Shannon, but Tony did not know what the information included.

Don expressed concern that Tony is meeting with Joetta and giving her direction without the other members of the working group being present. Tony assured the group he would keep them involved in decisions concerning Joetta's activities in the future.

The T15 technical working group will meet next on May 2 to review Joetta's progress and set a deadline for completion of her work. The deadline will likely be in mid-fall of 2002 or early winter of 2003. In the meantime, Don will type up a list of seral stage definitions to apply to the non-federal data, and distribute the list to all members of the working group. (Team Leader note: from the May 2nd teamlet meeting, a draft map of the Basin Vegetation work will be completed by Joetta and available to the group by the end of May)

T7 Potential Vegetation in the Project Area

Tony and Don discussed the process by which future potential vegetation will be determined. The first step will be delineation of pre-project vegetation to determine site potentials. Pre-project vegetation at Baker Lake can be determined by interpreting pre-project aerial photos. Pre-logging photos (ca. 1956) will be used to identify overstory species composition (e.g., conifer vs. hardwood). Post-clearing photos (1959) will be used to identify streams and wet areas. Lake Shannon will be more problematic because there are no aerial photos from the pre-project period. The early 20th Century GLO (General Land Office) survey notes for the area may be useful, but these are spotty and somewhat subjective with respect to vegetation. Early topographic maps may also be useful, but again they are likely to be crude relative to the maps of today. For both reservoirs, Don suggested that habitat be classified according the Johnson and O'Neil (2001) habitat types used in the T2 analysis species selection.

Tony asked why we would need to determine the potential vegetation of Lake Shannon. Don suggested it would be needed for the cumulative effects analysis for NEPA. Tony responded that he thought assumptions about future condition could be made without knowing past vegetation. Marty added that potential future condition could be substantially different from pre-project condition because the Lake Shannon area would be converted to either residential development or commercial tree farm if the reservoir were removed. Under either scenario, the vegetation (and habitat) would be much less diverse than pre-project.

It was concluded that Tony would arrange for a qualified person to do aerial photo interpretation of pre-project vegetation for Baker Lake. The following habitat types will be used: conifer forest, deciduous forest, shrub, wetland, rock/other unvegetated, and stream. This will be completed on the same schedule as the T15 mapping. The contractor will attempt to make a similar estimate pre-project vegetation at Lake Shannon using the GLO survey data, and Tony will keep the working group posted on any difficulties that are encountered. (Team leader note: Don is reviewing the GLO notes to see what information in them would be useful for vegetation mapping purposes. Also, this study request has no study plan. Marty is preparing a draft study plan that will be available for review by May 10th)

REVIEW OF EXISTING STUDY REQUESTS – NEXT STEPS

R-T12: Grizzly Bear Spring Foraging Habitat Value

Joetta received the digital copy of the spring forage GIS analysis the USFS did of the Baker River Basin. She has not done anything with it yet. Tony suggested that determination of forage quality and quantity in the basin could be a proposed license condition in the settlement agreement, depending on the outcome of the impact analysis and other collaborative discussions.

R-T10 Mountain Goat Habitat Use

Don asked if the results of the 2001 recreation surveys are available yet. He would like to review them for any indication they can give as to project-induced recreation that might be impacting mountain goat summer habitat. Tony said the results are available in draft form. He will check to see if they contain information that would be of use in assessing potential goat impacts.

R-T20 Wildlife Use of the Draw-down Zone

Tony will conduct reconnaissance-level surveys of the draw-down zones in the spring and summer of 2002 to determine the general types and levels of wildlife use. This information will then be used in the fall of 2002 to develop detailed study plans, as needed.

R-T18 Breeding Bird Surveys

Further review of this study request is postponed until the analysis species selection process is completed.

R-T19 Habitat Evaluation Studies

Further review of this study request is postponed until the analysis species selection process is completed.

NEW STUDY REQUESTS, NEW TEAMLET MEETINGS

Land Availability Analysis

The group concluded that PSE would do preliminary analyses of land availability in 2002. A formal study request is not necessary for this activity, since it will not affect the terrestrial study budget. Detailed analyses of land needs and availability will be done under the supervision of the full working group in the future, but it is premature to initiate detailed studies now.

Forest Practices Applications

PSE may prepare and submit Forest Practices Applications (FPA) for company-owned timberlands within and near the Project boundary in 2002 in order to determine the value of those lands. PSE will provide drafts of the FPAs to the working group prior to submittal to the DNR.

Site-specific Impacts of New Project Facilities

Tony and Marty will continue to seek clarification from PSE on any new Project facilities, and they will keep the working group apprised.

MISCELLANEOUS

Patrick asked that the USFS give the working group a short presentation on the recently constructed Baker Lake Trail. Among other things, he is interested in knowing the process the USFS went through in establishing the trail, how the trail is intended to be used, any specific limitations on use, and any associated campsites. Don said he would make such a presentation at the next meeting.

PROCESS EVALUATION

Tony presented the group with a self-evaluation process the Solution Team has asked us to complete. The first part was a one-page questionnaire that each member completed privately and anonymously. The second part was a set of criteria for effective collaboration against which each member rated the group overall. This rating was done publicly by placing colored circles (green for good, yellow for neutral and red for bad) on posters containing each of the criteria. Everyone participated.

HANDOUTS

- Prioritization of Studies to Support PSE's License Application (Tony)
- Draft List of Potential Studies to Support PSE's License Application (Tony)
- Progress Report on T2 Vegetation Surveys in the Draw-down Zone (Hamer)
- Progress Report on Amphibian Surveys / Mollusk Spring Visit Progress Report (Hamer)
- Updated Terrestrial Working Group participant address list (Tony)

PARKING LOT (*Note: this list was not updated as a result of the April 17 meeting*)

- Conceptual Mitigation Approach (P/M/Es)
- Review time frame/goals of working groups/milestones
- Definitions of "project boundary", "project effects", "previous environment", "project area", NEPA definitions
- Watershed Analysis Presentation
- Land Management – Do study?
- Make list of all available relevant data. Create a subset of those data for Tony to always bring to meetings for group to continually reference.
- Are transmission lines in or out of FERC boundary?
- Changing Climate Patterns
- Determine land management allocations within Project boundary
- Tony to set up Wetland Field Trip

MEETING EVALUATION

Well Done

- The food was good

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-
- We avoided discussion of Continuing Impacts
 - The tables were arranged nicely

Need for Improvement:

- We missed Lyn and Mary Jean

TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR OUR NEXT MEETING

Mountlake Terrace, Washington

May 15, 2002, 8:30 AM - 2:00 PM

Bring a sack lunch and we'll work through.

1. Review notes/agenda/action items
2. Solution Team Update
3. Report on Existing Studies
4. Teamlet Reports
5. Update on Rare Plant Study Plan
6. Presentation of Historic Aerial Photos
7. USFS Presentation on the Baker Lake Trail
8. Planning for June field Trip/Meeting
9. Evaluate Meeting

Progress Report on Amphibian Surveys

4-16-02

The spring amphibian surveys for the Baker Lake Dam Re-licensing Project began on March 4, 2002 and will be completed by April 19, 2002. This spring visit focused on searching for egg masses. All areas with standing water within the fluctuation zone were surveyed on Lake Shannon and the entire fluctuation zone in Baker Lake was surveyed. Amphibian surveys were also conducted in 5 ponds in the upland areas, adjacent to the fluctuation zone.

Northwestern salamander and Red-legged Frog egg masses were found in both Lake Shannon and Baker Lake. Red-legged frog egg masses were found outside of a pond in Lake Shannon on dry ground. An egg mass from the dry ground was collected and put in an aquarium but did not survive. This site was monitored twice a week to determine the success rate. As of Monday, April 15th, the water level has risen and flooded out the egg masses. We cannot determine the survival rate of these egg masses due to the dark color of the water and the monitor stakes have been flooded out. Other egg masses that have been collected will also be reared in our aquariums to confirm identifications.

Mollusk Spring Visit Progress Report

Spring mollusk surveys began on April 16, 2002 and will be completed by May 2nd, 2002. Surveys are being conducted in the fluctuation zone at Baker Lake. No mollusk species were found in the one field day just completed. After the completion of the mollusk surveys, the data will be entered into a database and a final report summarizing all the findings will be completed.

April 17, 2002

Progress Report on T2 Vegetation Surveys in the Draw-down Zone

Vegetation surveys in the reservoir fluctuation (draw-down) zone began the first week of March 2002 and are to be completed by May 2002. We have completed surveys for all of Lake Shannon and Baker Lake's East side. In addition, we have surveyed all areas on the West side of Baker Lake South of Boulder Creek (just before the major bend in Baker Lake).

In order to differentiate between upland and lacustrine lands, a line was created at full pool elevation using GIS. This line was then printed on a new set of our field aerial photographs. All lands located below this full pool line are considered to be lacustrine wetlands, while lands above the full pool line are upland. Due to this division a splitting of polygons from those originally identified through photo-interpretation frequently occurs. As a result we are finding that the total number of polygons has dramatically increased.

Species identification has become easier in the past few weeks, as many grasses and sedges are beginning to grow as the weather warms. Every week in the field we are able to positively identify more species, which we had previously catalogued as unknowns that were to be identified later.

At this time, fieldwork is estimated to end by the first or second week of May, due to increased polygon sampling numbers and a late snowfall at Baker and Shannon Lakes.

Prioritization of Studies to Support PSE's License Application

Baker River Project Wildlife and Terrestrial Resource Working Group

The 2002 field season has already begun, and we'll need to reach consensus on the studies for this year within the next several weeks. Also, the clock is ticking on preparation of NEPA documents, and we need to make sure we are developing all the information needed to support that process.

The first issue we need to address is our approach to assessing Project effects. As you know, Carl Corey presented an outline for performing a "Continuing Impacts Analysis" in December 2002. Marty Vaughn took Carl's document, added provisions for addressing non-federal interests, and presented it as a written proposal in January 2002. At our February 2002 meeting we were told the Agency-Tribal-NGO caucus within the TRWG had reached consensus that we would not use the "Continuing Impacts Analysis" approach for determining Project effects. Several of the members felt the approach would restrict their options for PM&E measures in a Settlement Agreement. With the rejection of the "Continuing Impacts Analysis" approach, we are left with a void to fill. We do not currently have consensus on how to proceed in a manner that will meet everyone's interests.

In order to keep the WTRWG moving ahead in a productive manner, we would like to propose that we separate our work into two steps, as described below. It is PSE's belief that all studies necessary to complete Step 1 should be underway before Step 2 is initiated, and all aspects of Step 1 should be completed before Step 2 is completed. Otherwise, we run the risk that continued disagreements over process will prevent us from completing any studies in time to meet our FERC filing date. As we noted at our February 2002 meeting, one of PSE's primary interests is to meet the filing date with an acceptable License Application.

With that in mind, we propose we proceed according to the following steps:

STEP 1: Focus on the assessment of Project effects (new, ongoing (recurring), and cumulative impacts), and the development of mitigation measures where they are deemed necessary and appropriate.

A. Determine baseline conditions following the precedents set by FERC and NEPA.

B. Conduct studies to identify and quantify project effects, both negative and positive.

C. Develop mitigation measures that are adequate, effective and mutually acceptable

STEP 2: Address other interests of the WTRWG members through the collaborative process.

- A. Identify all other interests and issues, including those related to alternate baselines.
- B. Conduct studies to aid the development of enhancement measures.
- C. Develop enhancement measures to include in a settlement agreement.

The key to this approach is that we would separate the assessment of effects relative to the FERC recommended baseline (existing Project) from assessments of effects relative to alternate baselines (e.g., Continuing Impacts Analysis). This is not to say that we won't continue to consider interests related to the alternate baselines. As was said at the February meeting, PSE will continue to discuss interests related to alternate baselines as part of the collaborative process. In the short term, however, we feel it is important to initiate all studies necessary to assess terrestrial effects against the existing Project baseline in order to have an acceptable License Application. Step 1 is intended to accommodate that.

Over the next few weeks the WTRWG should be compiling a list of studies necessary to accomplish Step 1. Hopefully, we can get all the necessary studies initiated, and then return to our discussions of alternate baselines.

Draft List of Potential Project Effects for Baker River Terrestrial WG

Direct New Impacts

1. Potential Powerhouse Expansion at Lower Baker – vegetation, seeps, riparian amphibian, bald eagle perching, bats (?)
2. Potential New Recreation Sites – Site specific wildlife and wetland resources, rare plants, T& E, etc.
3. Potential Fish Facilities Expansion – Riparian and upland habitat
4. Potential Changes in Operations – Changes to fluctuation zone (?)

Ongoing (recurring) Impacts

1. Reservoir Fluctuation Effects – Nesting birds, small mammals, amphibians, mollusks, sessile forms, noxious weeds vector
2. Effects of Existing Facilities – Noxious weeds, rare plants, human activities to T & E species, Forest Practice Applications (FPA's)

Cumulative Impacts

1. Potential Amphibian fluctuation zone effects
2. Habitat Fragmentation

Potential New Study Needs to Support NEPA Review of Above Potential Effects:

1. Wildlife use in the fluctuation zones
2. Site specific resource effects of proposed new impacts
3. Forage/habitat value in the fluctuation zones – elk, deer, grizzly bear, waterfowl
4. Land values, availability
5. Forest Practices Applications