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## **BAKER RIVER PROJECT RELICENSE**

### **Recreational & Aesthetic Resources Working Group**

February 25, 2002

9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

USFS Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Headquarters  
21905 64<sup>th</sup> Ave. West  
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

### **AGENDA**

1. Review/revise minutes/agenda
2. Review action items
  - Update on IPP (ESA)
  - Is it spring yet? (re: traffic monitoring)
  - Review creel census data
  - Update on trout stocking
3. Update on existing studies: R9, R14, R11, R15
4. Study requests/pending study plans
  - R5, Aesthetics
  - R16, Needs Analysis
5. Evaluate 2001 data/identify 2002 field study needs
6. Discuss resource issues for Scoping Document 1
7. Review Parking Lot
8. Set agenda and location for next meeting (March 25)
9. Evaluate meeting

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USFS Office, Mountlake Terrace, WA

### FINAL MEETING NOTES

**Mission:** *“To develop alternative solutions and recommendations addressing recreation, education and aesthetic resources related to the Baker River Project and its operations leading to a settlement agreement.”*

**Team Leader:** Chris Lawson (Huckell/Weinman Associates) (425) 828-4463,  
clawson@huckellweinman.com

**PSE Contact:** Tony Fuchs: (425) 462-3553, tfuchs@puget.com

#### PRESENT

Chris Lawson (Huckell/Weinman Associates), Tony Fuchs (PSE), Ann Dunphy (U.S.F.S.), Jim Eychaner (Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation), Susan Rosebrough (National Park Service), Nancy Smaridge (Huckell/Weinman Associates), Andy Hatfield (PSE), Lyn Wiltse, facilitator, PDSA Consulting Inc.

#### SCHEDULE CHANGES AND MEETING LOCATIONS:

March 25 and April 22 meetings will be at USFS Office in Mountlake Terrace.

**NOTE:** *Be prepared to report on action taken on Action Items at our next meeting.*

#### AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY MEETING

February 25, 2002 Agenda

9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**NOTE: BRING LUNCH; BE PREPARED TO WORK THROUGH**

1. Review/revise minutes/agenda

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2. Review Action Items
  3. Update on Existing Studies (R9, 14, 15, 11)
  4. Study Requests/Pending Study Plans
    - R5: Aesthetics
    - R16: Needs Analysis
  5. Evaluate 2001 Data
  6. Identify 2002 field study needs
  7. Discuss Resource Issues for Scoping Document 1
  8. Review Parking Lot
  9. Set agenda and location for next meeting (March 25)
  10. Evaluate meeting

#### **NEW ACTION ITEMS**

- Chris: Secure contact from Whatcom and Skagit Counties
- Jim: Send Chris data on Draft SCORP Report (Board Review Draft of State wide survey of 15 different activity areas) so Chris can send out to team members.
- Chris: Get with teamlet of Ann (with Ardis and Jim as backups) re: integrating market analysis into needs analysis.
- Chris: Get with Ardis, Jim, Susan and Ann re: formulating survey data queries. Sent out two batches of Excel files – will continue to get new information over the next few weeks.
- Tony: Meet with Chris, Ann, R2 re: sharing resources for GIS mapping
- Tony: At Team Leader Meeting bring up toilets vs. parking lots
- Chris: Contact Mark MacFarlane of DNR re: relevant data.
- Ann: Send Chris a copy of the Forest Service ATM plan
- Andy: Bring boat ramp photos

#### **REPORT ON OLD ACTION ITEMS**

- Chris: Talked with Arnie and Nick re: Aquatics GIS layers. Arnie reported there would be layers we could use sometime soon. Chris will keep us posted. Ann reported that the Forest Service is doing GIS mapping as well. We will try to make sure we take into account areas of overlap with our suitability analysis.
- Chris: Asked R2 to put selected reservoir points on the viewshed map
- Tony: Got update on PSE/Dept. of Ecology water quality study. Have been measuring certain parameters (dissolved O2, plankton, fecal coliform, etc.) for years.
- Tony: Gave real estate update: PSE updated ownership/real estate data and sent to Forest Service for review
- Chris: Distributed angler survey, creel census (April – October compilation data to team members)
- Tony: Sent out 2001 list of accomplishments to Ann and Ardis.
- Ann: Talked with Brady re: quality of fishery
- Tony: Get with Susan Hada re: 866 phone capability at FS building at Mountlake Terrace.

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- Andy: Gave staffing update relative to possible ongoing monitoring (spring) of developed/dispersed sites. He said that PSE has invoked a hiring freeze and they will have to get creative with re-allocating existing folks if any additional survey work is needed.

## **INTRODUCTIONS:**

The group welcomed Nancy Smaridge, the field crew leader for the 2001 survey studies, who is now processing the 2001 study data for Huckell/Weinman Associates.

## **IPP (Interim Protection Plan) UPDATE**

Tony reported that an IPP has been developed by PSE and the federal services (NMFS and USFWS) for ESA purposes. This includes interim measures around ramping and instream flows. When FERC approves this plan it will be shared across all working groups.

## **CREEL CENSUS DATA**

Chris sent out the summary data on fishing that Ann put together. Anecdotal reports suggest that the quality of fishing at Baker Lake is going down. Jim indicated that is consistent with statewide trends, as statistics show the number of fishing licenses sold in the state of Washington has been going down 1-2% each year over the past decade.

## **TROUT STOCKING PROGRAM**

PSE will, at the direction of WDFW, stock Depression Lake instead of Baker Lake in 2002. They will do this prior to opening day of fishing. It has not been determined whether PSE will continue with this voluntary stocking program in future years.

## **EXISTING STUDIES UPDATE**

### **R9 RECREATION USE SURVEY – ELECTRONIC MONITORING**

Andy reported that it isn't spring yet. He'll keep us posted.

### **R11: RECREATION CAPACITY AND SUITABILITY ANALYSIS & R15 – Recreational Trail Routing**

Much of the initial work on these two studies is GIS work. We need to coordinate this effort with R2 and their other Baker relicensing GIS work, and with similar work the USFS has been conducting. We will get a teamlet (Tony, Ann and Chris) report on how to consolidate these efforts at our March meeting.

Jim reported that while there are no firm criteria for trail-based recreation enhancements, three priority areas to consider would be 1) around Concrete (where the people are); 2) around campgrounds; 3) under-served recreation users, which in this case appears to be mountain bikers. Jim was not aware of trail standards specific to mountain bikes, but said the USFS equestrian trail standards work well for mountain biking.

Ann added there is a need to look at opportunities for road-to-trail conversions, re-use of historic trails, and reducing impacts to wilderness.

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Tony wondered if we might want to look at putting in a trail from Concrete to Upper Baker Dam in the review for suitability. The group agreed that it would be advisable to use already impacted corridors (existing roads and trails) where possible, to avoid new construction impacts.

#### **R7 +R8 = R14: SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION**

Chris reported that this is ongoing – nothing earth shaking has come up yet.

#### **STUDY REQUESTS/PENDING STUDY PLANS**

##### **R16: NEEDS ANALYSIS**

Chris incorporated Lauri's comments into the most recent version of the Study Plan (which was distributed January 30, and replaces the January 23 draft).

On defining *need*: Are we defining needs for people who are there now? Potentially there in the future? Jim suggested that we look at statewide data and define *need* in those terms. The highest need appears to be in urban areas.

From a Forest Service perspective there is a need to define *need* in terms of future – Who are we going to serve and based on what our niche is/should be? The niche has been broadly defined in terms of the Forest Plan. We also need to look at what the land base will allow. Ann reported there is a new planning process being used as a visioning process for this basin (see Task 7 of the study plan). The Forest Service will be discussing (internally) whether this process would be a good fit for Baker or how this might guide the efforts of the Working Group. We will have input on this decision.

Jim would hate to see us end up saying: "We have campgrounds and boat ramps now, so we need more campgrounds and boat ramps in the future. Statewide data support walking, hiking, sightseeing and bicycling as the primary recreational activities". It was suggested that we determine how to integrate the needs/concerns/issues raised by folks at PSE's initial public meeting in April 2000 into the needs analysis; this could be included in either Task 4 or Task 7.

It was the consensus of the group to move this beyond the Study Plan phase (i.e., implement the study).

##### **ROAD ACCESS ANALYSIS**

The Forest Service ATM plan is a good place to start in looking at existing and desired future road access conditions. Do we need a study request? Can we just do this as a GIS layer used in another study? It was the consensus of this group that we don't need a separate study for this and that we will treat it as secondary data collection to feed into the needs analysis

##### **2001 DATA**

It appears that, in general, our sample size of 472 drop box surveys was representative and sufficient. Depending on how we might want to "drill down" into certain issues we may want to collect additional

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data.

There were 309 total interviews. If responses to questions from Baker Drop Box and Interviews are similar, we could lump these data together, increasing our sample size considerably.

In response to a question about any weaknesses in survey coverage, Chris mentioned that while he wished we had more completed surveys from dispersed campers, he feels what we have (about 75 completed drop-box surveys and interviews) is sufficient (for generalizations about dispersed campers as a user group).

In discussing user behavior and surveying obstacles, Nancy and Andy noticed that there is a lot of alcohol being consumed at Baker recreation sites, especially at Lake Shannon. This could have management and marketing implications.

Note: We haven't got an idea of how different lake levels influenced recreationists in 2001 (because the reservoirs were generally high during our survey period). It may be difficult to try to get these data, depending on lake level patterns in 2002. In addition, even if we surveyed users at times of low lake levels, we would not be covering the people who stayed away because of low water. We may have to use anecdotal data or make inferences based on boat ramp use. Andy will continue to take photos of accessible boat ramps at various lake elevations. He will also shoot Blue Tarp, the Seaplane Launch and the Horseshoe Cove swimming area.

Nancy is currently tabulating the observation data and dispersed site inventory data and manual traffic counts. The electronic traffic counts are also being processed.

## **ICD AND INITIAL SCOPING DOCUMENT**

We discussed Connie's 2/12/02 memo explaining PSE's decision (at FERC's suggestion) to draft Scoping Document 1 and issue it as a companion document to the Initial Consultation Document. All were reminded that the completion of Scoping Document 1 does not mean the end of the issue identification phase, and that PSE is sharing this initial draft in the spirit of collaboration. There will be a public meeting mid-May to discuss both documents and formal comments for the Scoping Document 1 will be due mid-June and for the ICD will be mid-July.

## **2002 STUDY NEEDS**

- Lake elevation impacts
- Other parameters we want to have modeled
- Land use
- Aesthetics

## **PARKING LOT**

- Operationally define "project induced"
- Tie education piece to ALL Working Groups
- Hold periodic "outreach" meetings for feedback from other groups (hiking, horseback riding, etc.)

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- Land Management
  - Forest Service presentation of SMS
  - Trailhead surveys
  - Have demonstration of Charles Howard Operational Model (this April?)
  - Refer to April 26, 2000 Interest List.
  - R5 – Aesthetics
  - Water quality study (recreation induced) – Aquatics Working Group
  - Presentation of National Forest Plan

## **EVALUATION OF MEETING**

### **Things Done Well**

- Nancy!
- Nice to see the data
- Approved another study!

### **Need for Improvement**

- Missed Lauri
- Spent too much time on action items
- Need to get into data more
- Ran over

## **TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR MARCH MEETING**

**March 25, 2002 Agenda –USFS Office in Mountlake Terrace.**

**9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

**NOTE: BRING LUNCH; BE PREPARED TO WORK THROUGH**

1. Review/revise minutes/agenda
2. Review Action Items
  - Is it spring yet?
  - GIS Teamlet Report
  - Data Teamlet Report
3. Update on Existing Studies (R14, 11, 15, 16)
4. Evaluate 2001 data
5. Identify 2002 study needs
6. Set agenda and location for next meeting (April 22 at MLT)
7. Evaluate meeting