



Baker River Project License Implementation

Joint Workshop: Aquatic Resources Group (ARG) & Cultural Resources Advisory Group (CRAG)

PRESENT

Arnie Aspelund, Elizabeth Dubreuil, Scott Williams, Doug Bruland, Cary Feldmann, Nathanael Overman, and Nick Verretto (PSE); Brett Barkdull, Brock Applegate, Jed Varney, Steve Stout, and Kevin Kurras (WDFW); Kara Kanaby (USACE); Tom Van Gelder (Trout Unlimited); Craig Olson (NW Indian Fisheries); Greta Movassaghi, Jon Vanderheyden, and Jan Hollenbeck (USFS), Bob Helton (Citizen); Stan Walsh (SRSC); Jon-Paul Shannahan (Upper Skagit Tribe); Ashley Rawhouser (NPS); Heather Miller (HRA); Rob Whitlam by phone (SHPO); Lou Ellyn Jones by phone (USFWS); Lyn Wiltse and Jamie Riche (PDSA Consulting)

ACTION ITEMS

- Scott Prior to March 31, 2011 convene the PSE Resource Group leads to evaluate possible approaches for the ARG and CRAG to consider at their April meetings. Email draft for all to review as soon as available.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

Scott noted that the genesis of this decommissioning is in Settlement Article 101(d), which calls for PSE to decommission Sockeye Spawning Beaches 1, 2, and 3 and vacate the USFS lands in a way that is satisfactory to them. Cary reminded folks that this issue was addressed in the licensing process because the Baker River channel started displaying increased migration variability during the 80's, thus subjecting beaches 1-3 to the potential for washouts & destruction. In the 90's, PSE built Spawning Beach 4 to replace Beaches 1-3 with the agreement that Beaches 1-3 would be decommissioned. Subsequent needs to temporarily retain Beaches 1-3 delayed decommissioning and was included as a condition in the new license.

HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS

Heather and Elizabeth described the Baker River Hydroelectric Development Historic District, the Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP), and related regulations. This is a discontinuous District and includes resources in the vicinity of the Lower Baker Fish trap, dam, and houses, the Upper Baker powerhouse complex, and the spawning beach complex. The parts of the spawning beach complex that contribute to the designation include but are not limited to Beaches 1 and 2; Beach 3 was constructed after the period of significance identified for the District (1924-1959) and is considered too new to be considered contributing under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1964.

The HPMP requires any changes within the historic district boundary that adversely affect the integrity of the district – including removal of historic buildings or structures, addition of non-historic materials or construction of modern resources within the boundary – to be resolved (avoided, minimized, or mitigated) through consultation with SHPOs, THPOs, concerned tribes or other consulting parties.

The CRAG has reviewed the decommissioning plan and determined that, if implemented as-is, the most recent (March 2011) decommissioning proposal would cause an “adverse effect”. The question for the

groups to consider today is whether the adverse effect on the property can be avoided or minimized. If not, can the effects be mitigated?

The CRAG developed a list of more specific questions at their February 16, 2011 CRAG meeting:

- Can the concrete structures remain or will they erode?
- Can we leave everything as it is?
- What about reconstructing the channel to go around the entire area?
(No adverse effect if all but Beach 3 remains).
- What can be preserved?
- Can the inlet channel be preserved?
- What is appropriate mitigation?
- What is most interpretable?
- What will the Forest Service be comfortable with?
- Who will manage what remains?

USFS SCOPE OF WORK / RECOMMENDATIONS

Greta explained that USFS is thinking of this as a planning and research process. They developed the updated scope of work to establish the sideboards for the project and outline their needs and concerns. She pointed the group to the list of objectives in the March 2011 draft scope of work, which outline the Forest Service's primary interests:

- Removal of non-historic structures and hazardous materials
- Provide for public safety
- Configure channels and ponds at the site in a manner that provides for natural reproduction and rearing of native fish and is consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy and preservation of historic structures
- Provide limited access for fry releases (several potential sites)
- Address the effects of inundation from the Baker River on the site and any planned actions
- How to adapt to loss of access to the site if the road is washed out by river migration

DIALOGUE

Related to the last bullet above, Jon noted that USFS will continue to provide routine / basic road maintenance (e.g., periodic application of gravel), but will let the road go if / when the river washes it out. They plan to end the road at the flood plain boundary and move the nearby trailhead accordingly.

Greta specified that hazardous materials include the asbestos in the pipe and potential fuel contamination of the area soils as well as the fencing and any other materials that could potentially be washed downstream if the river moves. A study will be required to ascertain the presence and possible extent of any other hazardous materials on site.

The group talked about various scenarios to clarify each others' interests and brainstorm potential options that could balance competing directives.

Stan expressed the view that, from a natural process fisheries standpoint, the best outcome would be to remove all the hardened structures within the flood plain. He pointed out that there are many natural, historic river channels running through the area and commented that any structures remaining would become detrimental to natural fishery processes when the river jumps over.

Craig pointed to the need to have a place / way to plant the millions of fry that are and will be coming from the new hatchery. Related to this, Jed explained the risk of leaving any kind of structure / material in the area due to the prevalence of theft and vandalism.

Stan asked if it would make sense to generate a list of possible alternatives ranging from removing everything to maintaining everything, with a few options in between. One possible "in between" option he

mentioned could be to remove Beaches 2 & 3 entirely since they are the ones with hardened materials, asbestos and flood plain fill, and then preserve Beach 1 for historic value.

Elizabeth noted that one possible alternative – standing alone or in conjunction with other actions – could be to create meaningful I&E materials to capture the beaches’ historical value and context.

Scott suggested creating a matrix to clarify the options and help guide the group’s thinking. The group brainstormed an outline for this matrix (below). Scott volunteered to work with PSE’s Resource Group leads to create the first draft of the matrix, which will then be forwarded to the ARG and CRAG for review and editing. The goal is to identify mutually exclusive elements and any cascading effects (e.g., changing *X* impacts A, B, and C while changing *Y* impacts A, C, E, and F, etc.).

Rob expressed the need to ensure that this evaluation process is detailed, deliberative, and scientific.

Nick expressed concern with the proposal for PSE staff to generate the table and forward it back out to the ARG and CRAG for dialogue and next steps. He felt that it may usurp the licensing and resource groups’ interest-based approach. He suggested instead that a representative teamlet generate a list of alternative actions (ranging from keep everything to keep nothing with several “in between” options) and then evaluate them based on the stakeholders’ interests.

Greta suggested there is value to both approaches. Scott agreed and stepped up to schedule a meeting of PSE’s resource folks to generate a first draft of possible approaches for the ARG and CRAG to consider. He will do this by the end of March so that the ARG and CRAG can review the teamlet’s work at their April meetings.