

RRG Final Meeting Notes

October 16, 2012 / 9:00 – Noon / Skagit Service Center, Burlington, WA 98233



Baker River Project License Implementation

Recreation Resource Group Meeting Final Meeting Notes

October 16, 2012, 9:00 am – Noon

Team Leader: Pam Garland, PSE (pamela.garland@pse.com)

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

PRESENT

Pam Garland, Tom Flynn, Elizabeth Dubreuil, Haley Edwards, and Miriam Decker (PSE); Ann Dunphy and Carol Gladsjo (USFS); Brock Applegate by phone (WDFW) and Lyn Wiltse, facilitator and note taker (PDSA Consulting).

DECISION: “Shall the RRG approve PSE RAM funds Proposal, dated 09-24-2012, for the purchase and installation of bear-resistant commercial waste containers for Kulshan Campground, boat launch and day use area?” **Decision for RAM funds allocation is approved.**

FUTURE RRG MEETING DATES

9:00 – 11:00 am on the third Tuesday of each month is a placeholder for potential meetings or conference calls. We will provide Web-Ex capability for these meetings to facilitate remote attendance.

Next Scheduled In-Person Meeting:

- Feb. 19, 2013 (RRG and LEP) at the PSE Skagit Office in Burlington.
- June 18, 2013 Cultural Resources Law Enforcement Training
- Oct. 15, 2013 (RRG and LEP) at the PSE Skagit Office in Burlington.

Website: All are invited to check out the new Baker Licensing website. You can find Baker River documents available to the resource groups such as resource group plans, reports, meeting notes, etc., via PSE.com: <http://pse.com/aboutpse/HydroLicensing/Pages/Baker-River-Licensing.aspx>

NEW ACTION ITEMS

- All In addition to the above dates, please continue to reserve the third Tuesday of each month from 9:00-11:00 for possible additional meetings or conference calls.
- All Email to Pam 2013 season proposals for funding by end of January, 2013.
- Ann Let Pam know which GIS layers you would like PSE to post to the FTP site.
- Pam Set up meeting to discuss dam light fixtures with Baker electrical engineer, Haley, Elizabeth, Pam, Ann, Miriam, Brock and anyone else interested (Corrina for Concrete?)
- Ann By year end provide to Pam (to share with other team leaders) locations of new dispersed recreational sites so we can determine which ones are within the FERC boundary (generally 200ft above full pool) and perform surveys where required. Preferred format is *Shape files*.

- Tom Meet with Pam to discuss applicability of construction closeout. Cary and Greta felt this was appropriate.
- WDFW Provide Ann with a copy of trailer counts for Baker Lake 2012 fishing season. USFS would also appreciate a summary of fishing success data (creel sample), if available.

ONGOING ACTION ITEMS

- All Let Pam know of any updates to the contact list for your organization (A recent request was sent out to agencies from AnnaWingfield. Please send the information to her, as requested).
- Pam Continue to coordinate cross-resource group collaboration (e.g., I&E) – ongoing.

REVIEW OF AGENDA AND MEETING NOTES

The draft meeting notes from our last meeting on June 19, 2012 were finalized without changes and will be posted to the PSE website. We also reviewed the agenda and noted that all Action Items have been completed!

LICENSE IMPLEMENTATION / BRCC UPDATE

Tom Flynn introduced himself as the new licensing manager for PSE. He has been in this position for three months now. He previously worked at UW and has been at PSE for the last four years, mostly in the area of compliance having to do with the operation side of things (hydro, wind farms and combustion turbine plants). He is a marathon runner, on the Redmond City Council, and enjoys hiking in the wilderness. He has a degree in chemical engineering and a PhD in Mythological Studies.

Tom reported that the BRCC last met on May 30 and will meet again at the PSE Snoqualmie Operations Center October 24. In addition to reports from the various resource working groups, there will be an update on the status of various construction projects. One of the main topics will be finalizing the Baker Project Evaluation Guidelines.

The PSE Baker License Website shows updates from the various working groups as well as a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation that Cary put together to tell the story of the Baker Project relicense process. A comprehensive calendar of the times and locations of all Baker working group meetings is posted on the website.

The fourth Wednesdays will continue to be reserved throughout 2012 and 2013 for BRCC conference calls as needed.

DECISION: (Decision for allocation of RAM funds is approved)

“Shall the RRG approve PSE RAM funds Proposal, dated 09-24-2012, for the purchase and installation of bear-resistant commercial waste containers for Kulshan Campground, boat launch and day use area?”

Pam opened the discussion by explaining that PSE was not able to get the proper wildlife resistant containment needed from Waste Management. The current containers have plastic lids that don't latch or lock. PSE was able to keep things clean even with these inadequate dumpsters. Waste Management has assured Pam that they would service containers if PSE purchased them. With the biological opinion of the license – Article 410, there are obligations to keep things clean.

Pam explained that they are advocating the purchase of the medium sized model that is recommended by the Bear Saver folks. Brock explained this is the style he saw used in the Grand Tetons where they have Grizzly Bears and the containers worked well. Pam thinks PSE will be able to better manage how they are maintained. The PSE Baker crew will provide minor maintenance of these containers Costs for this minor maintenance would be included in the plant operating budget (and would not impact RAM funds). The Forest Service campgrounds are also dealing with less-than-adequate waste containers so what we learn from these purchases may help inform their future decisions.

After some discussion, a poll was taken of the designated representatives of each organization present and there was no objection to approving the proposal. Note: Stan Walsh emailed Pam his proxy vote of “no objection”.

We then reviewed the proposal in light of the new project evaluation form that will be vetted at the upcoming BRCC meeting. In the RAM fund description there is a listing of what types of projects would qualify for the funds. It would be good to put this into the proposal and also say why the RAM funds are appropriate to use for the purchase (rather than another funding source). It would be good to provide research on why we expect the purchase to meet the stated goal. In this case that might mean contacting others who are using these types of containers and asking about their experience and using that to help justify the request.

Discussions were as follows: The section on reporting should be flexible based on the scope of the proposal. Do we want to have the resource groups define an overall vision and then look to see if the request meets that vision? There will be a need to balance emerging needs (dispersed recreation and boat launch) with unplanned projects like the bear-proof waste containers. We agreed it would be informative to have these identified by spring so it can be considered in the next round of decisions in Spring of 2013.

It was suggested to have a list of forecasted projects and have people consider what best meets the spirit and terms of the license. We agreed that it makes sense to do this at the resource group level. How is this expressed in Article 602? Realizing it is an adaptive management fund and there are emerging issues, how closely do we need to tie this back to the license articles as they stand? As long as there is a sponsor to support it, it would be considered by the resource group. It seems there would have to be a nexus established to the project. It may extend beyond the physical boundary.

We also need to clarify how and under what circumstances to notify PSE if there are substantial changes to the project scope. How are we operationally defining “substantial?” The USFS contacting process requires them to have the money in hand in order to go forward. We also need to determine how to respond if we end up with a cost savings; do those funds go back into the RAM fund? By what mechanism? Should this be handled with flexibility? There is a fine balance of being transparent and disclosing everything and still trying to get the work done. The spirit behind this is to protect the decision making at the resource group level. PSE wants the process to ensure all stakeholders get the value of what they agreed to. And PSE is responsible for the reporting of the expenditures.

The last sentence under Project Reporting stated that final invoices for the work will be paid after completion of the work and acceptance of the final report. The required funding that PSE provides has been paid up front. The USFS invoices PSE and then PSE has been distributing the money up front, with accounting after (annual reports). The accounting language for SA 602 “Adaptive Management funding” implies a reimbursable account, with payment disbursements made, following work invoices. There may be a need to have two different approaches – one for the USFS (who has an agreement with PSE to get the money up front) and another for other parties.

RECREATION SEASON IMPACTS

Pam reported the biggest change has been due to the sockeye fishery. This year’s great weather compounded the impact. PSE experienced substantial increase in use at the Kulshan campground, boat launch and day-use/parking areas. There were four non-holiday weekends where they were at capacity.

The boat launch there is still free of charge and was “its own little nightmare” at times. Pam believes that the contracts they have in place with LEPs have made a huge difference. They have managed PSE’s areas really well. This was the second year of having the WDFW enforcement boat stored at Upper Baker. In addition to storing the boat, WDFW had permission to fuel the boat there this year. They were able to better use their time, by eliminating drive time to and from fueling stations. WDFW increased their visits out to the dispersed sites this year. PSE will be investigating ways of improving launching at Kulshan. The launch can easily accommodate double launching (two boats launching simultaneously); however, the travel path needs to be defined better. PSE will be looking into

improvements before next year.

Campgrounds and launches had higher maintenance costs this year. Kulshan Campground continues with no charge for launch or day use parking. Planning was made easier by WDFW clearly defining the season. There were still issues of fishermen making noise in the campgrounds at 3:00 and 4:00am.

The Forest Service has signage to help direct people to open boat launches. LEOs help direct people also. The Forest Service had folks out there by 6am to also help direct people. The Forest Service reported that after two seasons with a successful sockeye fishery people are better prepared and make better choices and this helps spread people out. This gives the fishermen better choices as well.

The Forest Service peak number on the lake was 336 (at the boat launch). This didn't capture some of the dispersed parking. It might be approximately 400.

Forest Service PowerPoint Presentation: 2012 Recreational Season Highlights

Ann walked us through a PowerPoint of highlights of the season. The Forest Service experienced more weekends where they were completely booked than prior years. They didn't get any non-weekend counts. There were between 300 and 400 boats during the peak season.

Capacity was a little higher than the 400 users they got last year. When the Panorama boat launch is full there is quite a bit of brush maintenance required. The Forest Service had to hand-cut brush to make room for parking on the shoulders of the road. During the fishing season there are more mid-week stays. This summer there was better weather in August and September. Horseshoe and Swift Creek are the largest campgrounds and were more heavily used. The day use fees (for parking, picnicking, etc.) were way up also this year, especially for Swift Creek and Horseshoe where there is a swim beach. It is more of a fishing crowd than before the success of the sockeye fishery. Lots of fish guts right on shore. They are trying to encourage people to dump fish guts in deeper water. Fish cleaning stations might be something they will consider for the future.

There was much more parking along Baker Lake Highway for dispersed use as well. These are larger camps – not your typical back camper camp. Need to provide ways for safe food storage. 30-40 dispersed sites being used by big groups. Ann will provide a list of locations of the new dispersed sites so we can determine which ones are within the FERC boundary. They are installing bulletin boards and tent pads for main sites at upper end of the lake. They are having to move (dig holes) the pit toilets to new locations each season. They also installed 10 new fire rings on the other side of the lake.

She also walked us through a spreadsheet of the trailer counts on the campgrounds. Ann will get WDFW's trailer counts and put them all on a single spreadsheet with the Forest Service data. There were 1200 more vehicles than last year.

Ann reported that the FS typically deals with overuse in the following ways: Add facilities, personnel, overflow areas, and more law enforcement. Does increasing fees decrease us? It would likely push people toward Kulshan. Because of environmental limitations, they are not sure if they are able to expand capacity. The sockeye fishery has forced the FS into thinking about this sooner than they would otherwise. They might have to make dispersed sites designated sites.

OTHER RRG ITEMS

SA 301 – Recreation Management Report

Will go to 60 day review the end of the year and will be submitted to FERC in April of 2013.

SA 302 – Aesthetics Management Plan

No comments have been received on this so it is being finalized and will be finalized and available on the website.

SA 303 – Baker Lake Resort Redevelopment Plan

Need a final summary close-out document from the Forest Service for the 2012 annual report. SA 601 says we need to close it out. Tom suggested maybe we follow the form of a Post Construction Close-out. Tom will meet with Pam to discuss. Cary and Greta felt this was appropriate.

SA 304 – Baker Reservoir Recreation Water Safety

The tear maps were well used. Pam explained they did early season lakeside and in-lake monitoring to check for hazards, debris, etc. The biggest debris problem was near the Shannon Creek boat launch. A water safety map and tear sheet pages are posted at the Lake Shannon boat launch. Once there is a developed site, PSE will also be installing a bulletin board, similar in style to the bulletin boards at Baker Lake boat access sites. The USFS is not responsible for the bulletin board at Lake Shannon. The Forest Service will add new stickers to buoys this fall, at Swift Creek CG swim area. They installed solar powered lights on the log boom at Swift Creek. There are some big snags sticking up in the upper corner of the lake. Someone tied a red flag onto one of them to serve as a make-shift warning to boaters. These snags should be cut off at low pool. Pam has requested work to be completed by Baker River crew, as the opportunity presents itself.

SA 305 – Lower Baker Developed Recreation

The annual report is complete and will roll into the overall 301 report.

SA 306-16

The draft of SA 312, Developed Recreational Monitoring Plan, will be out for 30-day agency review on October 17 and will be submitted to FERC next year. PSE is looking forward to FS input on this.

SA 318 – Law Enforcement Plan

The 2011 annual report has been sent out. It summarizes the 2011 recreational season. LEP team members will meet again in early spring with ideas for proposals for the 2013 recreation year, based on data collected at today's LEP meeting.

NEW LIGHTING FIXTURES FOR UPPER BAKER DAM

Pam explained the electrical engineer from the Baker Project is looking at making changes to the lighting in the Upper Baker Dam. He intends to replace existing lights with up-to-date LED type lights. The lighting is to help people see as they drive across the dam at night. Suggestions included making the lights shine downward only to minimize impact on wildlife, including bird collisions. Elizabeth (team leader of the CRAG) needs to know how many lights, how they would be attached to the dam, etc. As the dam is an historic structure, she will need to check for adverse effects to the dam. We will also be required to use colors that are historically compatible with the dam. Pam will set up a meeting (phone conference) with Elizabeth, Haley, Ann, Miriam, and Brock. If there are others interested in the dam lighting, please let Pam know and she will include you in that conference call.

MEETING EVALUATION

Well Done:

- Pam needs to learn to share more (Webex)
- Brock was very patient with us through the technological challenges
- Very informative conversation around RAM fund expenditures
- Nice to meet Tom
- Facilitation was helpful
- Chocolates are always appreciated

Do Differently:

- Need to leverage technology to better link in those participating remotely

NEXT RRG MEETING: FEBRUARY 19, 2013 AT SKAGIT SERVICE CENTER IN BURLINGTON

MEETING TOPICS TO INCLUDE

- BRCC Update
 - Project Evaluation protocol for RAM funds
 - How are emerging issues handled?
 - Review updated FERC Boundaries (?)
- Discuss Projects / Allocations for New Purchases, etc.
 - Monitoring / feedback on programs, dispersed sites
 - Upgrading of boat ramps
 - Other resource impacts
 - Prioritize projects, strategize accordingly
- Update on Dispersed Recreation Plan
- Update on Upper Baker Dam Lighting
- Review of the 2013 Implementation Schedule
- Evaluate Meeting

A brief LEP Meeting will follow.

HANDOUTS

- October 16, 2012 RRG Meeting Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes from June 19, 2012
- 09-24-2012 RAM Proposal (PSE)
- Handout on proposed Upper Baker Dam Lighting Fixtures