

## **BAKER RIVER PROJECT RELICENSE**

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

February 26, 2001

9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

PSE Mt. Vernon Business Office  
1700 East College Way  
Mt. Vernon, WA

### **AGENDA**

1. Review/revise minutes/agenda
2. Review action items
3. Define “project-induced” recreation
4. Continue defining studies
  - near-term 2001 study needs
  - 2001 study priorities
  - 2001 study plan assignments
  - subsequent study needs
5. Set agenda for next meeting (March 26; consider meeting in Mountlake Terrace)
6. Evaluate meeting
- 7.
- 8.

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### 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.”*

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

#### PRESENT

Chris Lawson (Huckell/Weinman Associates, Inc.), Ann Dunphy (U.S. Forest Service), Jamie Van De Vanter (Van De Vanter Group), Jim Eychaner (IAC), Ardis Bynum (U.S. Forest Service) by phone, Andy Hatfield (PSE), Tony Fuchs (PSE), Lyn Wiltse, facilitator (PDSA Consulting)

**NOTE:** The next few 2001 meeting dates are as follows: 3/26, 4/23, and 5/21 (to avoid Memorial Day). **Times will be 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.** The location will remain, for the most part, at the PSE office in Mount Vernon, WA. **On March 26, we will meet at the Forest Service office in Mountlake Terrace.**

In the event of **adverse weather**, call Chris and he will have a message announcing any meeting change or cancellation.

#### NEW ACTION ITEMS

- Saul: Contact Nature Conservancy, NCCC, Park Service, City of Concrete, Forest Service re: their interests in outreach and education.

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- Chris: Touch base with Ken and Saul re: participation
  - Ann and Chris: Get together and share data and look at making any revisions to Chris's paper on project-induced recreation, and work on revised study requests/study plans.
  - Ardis and Jim: Review updated/revised study planning products.
  - Chris: Distribute PSE creel survey questions to team members.
  - Chris: Distribute updated study plans to members by March 19<sup>th</sup>.
  - Jim: Provide PSE with statewide recreation data to be used in SCORP.

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

- Chris: Emailed 1/11/01 version of study request form to all team members as soon as possible
- Chris: Collated and distributed study requests to all team members by February 13th.
- Wayne: Made a copy of the Corps EIS available to this group.
- Tony: Checked availability of digital aerial photos and digital terrain map. January 16<sup>th</sup> aerial photos were taken and made into digital topography of the drawdown zone. PSE is planning to take another set of photos now since the reservoir is as low as it can get. They have FERC boundary covered from just outside of it to 30 ft. depth into the reservoir. The new photos will be taken within the next two weeks. The second digital terrain map (all maps are at 5 ft. contour intervals) should be available to all members by the end of March/early April.
- Chris: Prepared and distributed by e-mail a paper defining "project induced" recreation.
- Ann: Reserved a meeting room for us at the Forest Service Building at Mountlake Terrace, WA for the next three months.

### **February 26, 2000 Agenda**

#### **9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at PSE Office in Mt. Vernon**

1. Review/revise minutes/agenda
2. Review Action Items
3. Define "project induced" recreation
4. Identify Studies: Prioritize 2001 studies and assign responsibilities for study plans, determine approach, how to allocate coverages, etc.
5. Set agenda and location for Mar. 26 meeting (Consider meeting in Mountlake Terrace)
6. Evaluate meeting

### **OPERATIONS UPDATE**

The project maintenance outage is currently scheduled to begin March 5. The reservoirs were drafted to minimum pool sooner than they otherwise would have because PSE (at the request of various fisheries agencies and tribes) was supplementing stream flows to protect salmon redds. Both reservoirs should be filled again by about the end of May, given normal precipitation through that period.

### **HANDOUTS:**

Discussion Paper on Project-Induced Recreation for the Baker River Hydroelectric Project, February 16, 2001 by Chris Lawson

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## **“PROJECT INDUCED” RECREATION DISCUSSION**

Chris walked the group through his paper. There was discussion about some of the conclusions drawn from the data, as well as which data were referenced in the paper. Ann reported that she had found two old USFS recreation plans for the area, one from 1948 and one from 1961. She stated those documents indicated that there was limited potential for dispersed recreation along the Baker River due to the terrain, and that the federal power site withdrawal (dating from about 1928) would have been a deterrent to construction of developed recreation facilities. One plan mentioned that Noisy Creek would be a good site for recreation development, but only if the operator purchased the private lands near that site (the old Scott Paper property).

The Forest Service representatives indicated that most recreationists are attracted by water and many are attracted specifically by lakes, which in this case essentially would not exist without the project; therefore, they believe that all recreation development that occurred after the project was built is project induced. Ann said that we should not try to speculate as to what development would have occurred without the project, but we should focus on the resources that we knew existed prior to the project. Chris agreed that we could never accurately establish what would have happened if Upper Baker had not been built, but noted that focusing only on what was present in 1956 would be the same as speculating that no additional recreation development would have occurred. Given the expansion of road and trail access in the Baker basin and the history of USFS recreation development through the 1970s, he felt that would be inappropriate.

Ardis suggested that the group move on to other topics, because we probably would not be able to agree on what would really have happened (with respect to recreation) without the project. Tony responded that he wanted to continue the discussion, because he felt strongly that the influence of road and trail access could not be ignored. The group subsequently agreed to move on to discussion of studies, with the intention that through studies we can flesh out what really constitutes “project induced” recreation.

Ann suggested there are some details that need to be clarified/corrected in the paper. Ann will meet with Chris to address the changes, and we will review them and continue this discussion at our March meeting. It will be a challenge to distinguish recreation which results from the project (e.g., flat water-related) and that which results from road access or fire-related trails. Some of the high-elevation recreation use in the basin originates at Baker Lake. We hope to uncover the degree of the connection through surveys/interviews.

## **STUDY REQUESTS**

Tony reported that the Terrestrial Working Group had two study requests, both addressing potential impacts on mountain goats, that they thought should be considered by the Recreation Working Group. The following discussion addressed whether these studies actually involved primarily recreation or wildlife issues, and whether the recreation group had access to the expertise needed to provide the types of information desired by the terrestrial group. Ann noted that the concern of USFS biologists over potential recreation impacts on goats centered on a couple of areas (including Anderson/Watson), and that the risk of adverse impacts on goat behavior appeared to be associated with off-trail recreational activity (i.e., that goats seemed to be relatively habituated to recreationists on trails and at camps). Group members observed that users probably would not be very forthcoming if our surveys asked about off-trail activity, that the goat population decline was relatively widespread and not confined to the Baker basin, and that

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recreation-related impacts might be only one of several potential factors in the decline. Based on these observations, the group decided to send the two proposed mountain goat-related studies back to the Terrestrial Working Group from which they originated.

The group also discussed the need and appropriate sponsor for potential study of water quality related to dispersed recreation sites. Based on the expertise available to the respective groups, the Recreation Working Group concluded that any such water quality study should be designed, managed and conducted by the Aquatics Working Group. However, coordination between the two groups will be needed.

The group had a rather lengthy discussion of how the 2001 recreation season was shaping up, primarily with respect to water and weather conditions, and whether it would be advisable to proceed with full-blown recreation field studies in 2001. Jim proposed that we defer detailed field studies to the 2002 season, because there is limited time available to develop complete study plans and survey instruments and there would be a significant risk that results from 2001 studies might have limited applicability because of abnormal conditions. Chris acknowledged a significant concern over the applicability of 2001 results, but indicated we needed to balance that risk against future schedule pressures relative to the recreation plan and the EA if the field studies were postponed to 2002. A clear consensus on this issue was not stated, but the group seemed to agree that monitoring of use patterns needed to be done in 2001 regardless, and that it might be advisable to conduct user survey (questionnaire) work on a limited or experimental basis during 2001.

The group then reviewed the 11 study requests submitted to date, clarified what was desired for each one and decided to revise and/or combine studies as shown below. They also noted which studies need to be begun this year.

**R-R12: Dispersed & Developed Site Inventory** (Combination of R-1, R-3, and R-6)

The group agreed this study should employ GPS equipment to locate and map both developed and dispersed recreation sites, and to inventory both facilities/resources present at the site and their condition. For dispersed sites, the inventory will include those with direct highway (Road 11) access and those on spur roads between the highway and Baker Lake, plus any boat-in sites anywhere (including Lake Shannon) and any walk-in sites from Baker Lake Trail. The study will capture developed and dispersed sites at the same time, and should consider seasonality of site use.

Ann noted that this study should address safety issues (as in request R-3), such as boating hazards (exposed stumps near launch and access points) and include elements from the proposed lake level survey (boater and camping use in drawdown zone).

**R-R13 Visitor Surveys** (Combination of R-2, R-3, R-4, R-10, R-11)

This study should look at recreation in Baker basin/project vicinity in the larger sense and cover user demographics (i.e., develop a user profile). It could be done with one-on-one surveys, exit surveys, observation, and/or mailers. Questions should investigate what makes the basin unique (include dispersed campsites, aesthetics, sight-seeing, etc.). We may want to add questions related to other resource areas. We should consider using one survey instrument in a variety of ways to get quantification of user levels, their experience, etc.

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Ann said that this study should include some off-site surveying, through mail or phone sampling of the general public, to address the market-area population using the Baker basin. Jim indicated that he was very uncomfortable with doing any off-site surveys, because people are getting very resistant to responding to such surveys, particularly phone surveys. He indicated IAC had recently spent \$100,000 on a statewide boating survey that ended up costing twice what had been originally expected, and the agency was still not sure if the data from the survey were reliable and usable. How off-site surveys could or would be done and whether they are cost-effective remain unresolved questions for this study.

Information needs identified in the original Recreational Fishing (R-4) study request can be met by questions that can be incorporated into the user surveys (R-13), and/or the annual creel survey conducted by PSE. Several people said they would like to see how they (PSE) do the creel survey. Jim suggested the group may want to do some surveys at boat launches, as that can usually be effective. Other questions noted in R-4 (related to impacts of fishing on the resources) are the responsibility of State Fish & Wildlife.

The group decided that the intent of the original study request for R-3, the Lake Level Survey could be split up between the new R-12 and R-13 studies. The site inventory (R-12) can cover physical aspects of lake levels in relation to use patterns at the resort, concession campgrounds, boat launches, etc., while the user surveys (R-13) can include questions about lake levels and the recreation experience. Tony noted that lake level mapping is being covered by the Aquatics and Operations Working Groups, and the latter group would be looking to identify operating ranges for boat ramps and other facilities.

#### **R-R5 Visuals & Aesthetics Study**

Discussion of this study request was deferred, as this work is not considered critical for completion in the 2001 season.

#### **R-R14 Secondary Data Collection (Combination of R-R7 and R-R8)**

The group agreed to combine two original PSE study requests, as both involved collection of secondary (already existing) information and would logically be conducted jointly. This study involves both collecting and aggregating existing data applicable to the study area that have not already been processed (e.g., USFS data on use of concessioner campgrounds have been collected for years, but have not been pulled together or analyzed). The group agreed there is no required start date for this study, but the earlier it is done, the better.

Jim will provide PSE with new statewide recreation data that he will be using later this year to prepare the next Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The data are not yet available in final form, but should be soon.

#### **R-R9 Recreation Use Survey-Electronic Monitoring**

Chris explained that this study request was to implement a limited program of using electronic traffic counters to count total traffic coming into the Basin and traffic at particular developed sites, for which we could estimate day use by subtracting the overnight use from the total traffic. The group raised several questions about such a study, such as whether we could use the results to get an idea of the popularity of different spots, how reliable the counters would be, how much they cost, and how usable these data would be. Chris replied that counters range widely in price and capability, and that if we did pursue this study PSE had assumed we would use classifying counters (which have the ability to distinguish vehicles

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pulling trailers) and that calibration work (visual observations checked against electronic records) would be a required component of any such program. The group tentatively decided it would be desirable to install a permanent counter on Road 11 to count cars coming into the Basin, and to do this before the start of the fishing season. This decision will be re-visit at the next meeting.

### **R-R11 Recreation Capacity & Suitability Analysis**

This study includes elements of or overlap with the site inventory study, although it also addresses potential (in addition to existing) recreation capacity, as well as components of the recreation needs analysis and other recreation plan functions. The group agreed to look at this after the 2001 field studies have been programmed, except for the elements that need to be reflected in R-12.

### **Summary of Study Request Disposition**

Based on the resolution of the proposed studies, the group characterized the original and revised study requests as follows:

<b><u>Studies for 2001 Field Season</u></b>	<b><u>Studies that could be Deferred</u></b>
R-12 (R-1, 3, 6)	R-5
R-13 (R-2, 3, 4, 10, 11)	R-11 (potential capacity and suitability)
R-14 (R-7, 8)	
R-9 (Counter on Road 11 to count cars coming into the upper basin)	

For future consideration: WATER QUALITY

Lyn suggested that a technical working group (or groups) needed to be created to revise the study requests and develop more detailed plans for the studies. Jim and Ardis agreed to review products developed by others. Ann and Chris were tabbed with figuring out how to proceed with study planning documentation.

### **PARKING LOT**

- Visioning exercise
- Organizational/agency goals
- Bounce around with meeting locations
- Operationally define “vicinity”, “watershed”, “project induced”, “dispersed”, or “displaced”
- List authorities that this team must be aware of
- Be sure someone from Recreational Resources area sits on the Solution Team.
- Look at dispersed recreation with the Project as a whole.
- Look into getting guest speaker from Seattle City Light
- Tie education piece to ALL Working Groups
- Hold periodic “outreach” meetings for feedback from other groups (hiking, horseback riding, etc.)
- Land Management
- Get a National Park Service rep
- Forest Service presentation of SMS
- Need good maps of the project area
- Consult with Jim Johnston (with WDFW)

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## **EVALUATION OF MEETING**

### Things Done Well

- Covered a lot of ground
- Good participation
- “Project induced” discussion
- Chris’s paper

### Need for Improvement

- Missed Lauri
- Need full participation for “project induced” discussion

## **TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR MARCH MEETING**

### **March 26, 2000 Agenda**

**9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Forest Service Building at Mountlake Terrace, WA**

**NOTE: NEW EXTENDED HOURS. BRING LUNCH; BE PREPARED TO WORK THROUGH**

1. Review/revise minutes/agenda
2. Review Action Items
3. Studies: Finalize 2001 studies
  - Review/discuss revised study request forms
  - Discuss study plans for near-term work
  - Provide direction for mobilizing studies in April
  - Discuss input to PSE opening day creel survey
4. Continue to consider definition of “project-induced recreation”
  - What facts will we use?
  - What is our premise?
  - How and when will we apply concept?
5. Set agenda and location for Apr. 23 meeting (Consider meeting back at Mt. Vernon)
6. Evaluate meeting