FINAL MINUTES

OCTOBER 4, 2005
STUDY PLANNING TELECONFERENCE

GIBSON DAM HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

FERC No. 12478

The teleconference began at 1:00, MDT. On the call were:

Glenn Phillips, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP);
Steve Leathe, MDFWP; Ron Hecker, US Forest Service (USFS);
Mark Wilson, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS);
Dick Rosenberg, Gibson Dam Hydroelectric Corp (GDHC);
Bob Hardin, Greenfields Irrigation District (GID);
Mike Prewitt, GDHC relicensing consultant.

Dick asked for group introductions and said the meeting was to add detail to the September 1 meeting in Helena. He turned the meeting over to Mike.

Mike explained the purpose of the meeting. He said that, for each of the fish and wildlife resources, FERC would require that agencies state whether or not a study was to be conducted. If a study was desired, he said that GDHC would like to get some input on the content of the study to aid in preparing a draft study plan.

He added that, if time permitted, GDHC would also like to get some input on resource issues for use in the upcoming Scoping process.

Study Planning

Mike started by asking about fisheries study plans. He said that from earlier conversations and from comments on the ICD that it appeared that there was enough available information to avoid having to do more fish distribution and abundance studies in Gibson reservoir.

Steve said that MDFWP had good basic information on relative abundance in the reservoir, collected during the past 5 years. He said that the reservoir contained primarily rainbow trout and white suckers, except for some grayling which had been stocked in the lake's inflow streams.

Ron Hecker said that the USFS biologist had expressed a concern about entrainment into the hydro project intakes, and might like to see a predictive model for this. Mike expressed his concern about entrainment models. He said that such models required

intensive data collection and hydraulic modeling at the dam face. He said that results of such model's were often not reliable.

Glenn said that MDFWP felt that the real issues relative to the project were flows in the Sun River, and that his agency would be willing to forgo entrainment studies if it would be assumed that some entrainment might occur, and that it would be mitigated for by streamflow augmentations in the Sun River downstream from Diversion Dam.

Ron said that he would confer with his fisheries biologist and get back with the group.

FWS said that most of their concern was for Sun River flows as well. He said he would confer with the USFS biologist as well.

Regarding the Sun River, Steve said that his department had a fair amount of information on the Sun River, on three sections they try to survey every year, at highway bridge near Augusta. He said these studies covered about 20 river miles. FWP surveys three sections on the Sun River, located approximately 25, 50 and 70 miles downriver from Diversion Dam

Mike brought up the instream flow topic. He said he had discussed the wetted perimeter work done several years ago with Steve.

Steve said they had done the wetted perimeter work in late 80s and got some inconsistent results at higher flows in the Diversion Dam area. He said that the study resulted in a minimum flow recommendation of 100 cubic feet per second (cfs), with a preferred flow of 220 cfs. He said that the wetted perimeter study was a recon level, and that he wasn't entirely sure he would like to go forward based on its results.

Mike asked if it would be necessary to conduct an Instream Flow Incremental Methodology (IFIM) study. He described the IFIM and said that it was very data intensive and required considerable consultation time from all parties because of the need to collaborate on all field data collection and model input parameters.

Bob said that he and Steve had looked at releases from the dam for fish but that it was difficult during the present drought period to release additional water. Bob said that they needed to fill Willow Creek Reservoir in the fall. This means less water over Diversion Dam.

Steve said that the US Bureau or Reclamation was working on a review of the existing operations model for the reservoir, but that he hadn't seen it.

There was considerable discussion on instream flow and reservoir operations modeling. Generally, the group agreed that using such a model to evaluate Sun River releases would be desirable.

Mike explained how such a model, when used in association with a flow vs. habitat relationship could serve as the basis of an optimization program to find the best operational regime in terms of water supply and storage, fish habitat and hydro generation economics.

The group agreed that they would further research the USBR model, and decide on whether to do an IFIM study on the Sun River.

The subject then moved to wildlife. Mike asked if the agencies would require field surveys.

Steve said he had talked with Quentin Kujala , the MDFWP wildlife biologist who said that there was enough existing wildlife information.

Ron said that the USFS had said in the ICD comments that they wanted more information on raptors in Sun River canyon and changes in various ICD section to include loons, swift fox, wolf information, grizzly bears. Ron Hecker stressed the need to address USFS sensitive and management indicator species.

Mike asked if there would need to be additional field surveys. Rob said he would check with his wildlife biologist on need for raptor surveys.

The subject then turned to endangered species. Mike asked it the group needed a field survey. Mark said that he wouldn't require additional studies. He said that FWS can send a list of threatened species. Mark said that the primary concern was about bald eagles and other raptor impacts, particularly from the project transmission lines.

Ron said that USFS is going through an amendment on Canada lynx status on Forest lands. He said that Sun River canyon doesn't contain good lynx habitat.

Ron and Mark said they would get back with GDHC on the needs for raptor surveys, but that they generally believed that no further wildlife surveys would be necessary.

On the topic of sensitive plant surveys, Ron said that USFS would require these surveys only in the areas in which construction would take place. He said that the USFS had just put some data on this topic together, using the state data base.

Mike said that plans for these surveys would be prepared prior to construction and would be highly specific to the construction areas. He said that it wasn't possible to do such plans now since the exact project design wasn't known.

Mike asked about wetlands, whether the FWS served as a US Army Corps of Engineers liaison. Mark said that all wetlands determinations were made by the Corps. Mike said that these were outside the fish and wildlife consultation area, and the GDHC would consult with the Corps. on them.

Study Planning Decisions and Action Items

In summary, the decisions and action items from the study planning part of the meeting were:

- No fisheries field studies necessary to describe existing resources
- USFS would confer with other agencies on need for entrainment studies
- Agencies would confer on need for an IFIM study
- No broad wildlife surveys necessary
- Need for better raptor surveys, especially near cliffs

ISSUES FOR SCOPING

The meeting topic then turned to Scoping. Mike explained that the Scoping process would begin this fall, and that a Scoping Document I would be prepared containing a revised project description and a draft list of resource issues. He explained what issues were in this context, and asked the participants for input on issues to be used in SDI.

Fisheries

- Sun River flow fluctuations caused by operation of hydro. Dick explained that the project was not to be a "peaking" or "load following" mode. Mike said that FERC would require ramping rate controls in the license.
- Plant shutdowns if project goes offline, and resulting changes in downstream flow. Mike said that conditions for this would be included in the license.
- Levels of water withdrawal from reservoir and resulting water temperatures in the Sun River.
- Interruption of flows during construction. If it will be an issue.

Wildlife

- Raptor electrocution;
- Grizzly bear safety; what to do if a grizzly comes into the construction area. (Mike mentioned that FERC often requires a bear safety plan prior to construction)
- Elk migration and sheep lambing in the area relative to construction timing. Relative to timing.

Water Quality

Mike said that the water quality issues were probably temperature, turbidity during construction, dissolved gases and other constituents. He said that the draft water quality study plan was probably broad enough to provide a baseline for about any parameter which might be affected.

Aesthetics

- Overall appearance of the powerhouse;
- Aesthetics of transmission line and views of the Rocky Mountain Front;

Recreation

- Construction during peak activity time and limitations in traffic.
- Effects on residents during construction.