

Mystic Lake Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 2301

**Custer National Forest
Billings, Montana
February 7, 2006
9:30 AM – 12:00 PM**

Objectives

Develop PM&E measures for riparian, botanical, and wildlife resources

Attendance

Barb Pitman	USFS, Beartooth Ranger District
Jeff Gildehaus	USFS, Beartooth Ranger District
Mark Nienow	USFS, Custer National Forest
Kim Reid	USFS, Custer National Forest
Dan Brewer	USFWS
Gregory Kennett	Ecosystem Research Group (ERG)
Melanie Smith	ERG
Ginger Gillin	GEI
Kristi Overberg	GEI
Jon Jourdonnais	PPLM

Meeting Objectives

Develop PM&E measures for riparian, botanical, and wildlife resources.

Proposed PM&Es (provided at end of meeting summary)

PPLM presented proposed PM&E measures for riparian monitoring, weed management, grizzly bear, and bald eagle/raptor protection.

USFS presented proposed PM&E measures for bald eagle and harlequin duck monitoring.

Summary of Meeting

Riparian Resources

Goal/Objective

Objective of the riparian monitoring study is to establish a baseline and to determine long-term trends from project operations such that if project operations change in the future, there is a method implemented to monitor the potential change or impacts.

Methodology

Baseline data is relatively easy to obtain, however it is more difficult to determine and separate responsible factors of change such as natural succession, exotic species, dam operations, recreational use, or grazing.

Four riparian methodologies were discussed 1) Transects as proposed by PPLM, 2) Daubenmire method as proposed by PPL, 3) PIBO method (Coles-Ritchie 2005), 4) nested method. Each method focuses on permanent sites for data collected on an interval basis and photo points (e.g., every 5 years).

Next Step

Riparian resource group (ERG, USFS, GEI) will review and meet again to determine the appropriate methodology to use for long-term monitoring of riparian resources at Mystic Lake. The group will decide on whether the methodology will focus on the community level or be species specific. Study areas will be determined and a detailed outline of the methodology and level will be provided for the PM&E. Exact location of field data collection will need to be determined at a later date and have needs to have the flexibility to be changed or modified if necessary.

Final draft Riparian PM&E will be provided to GEI (email to Ginger Gillin, ggillin@geiconsultants.com) by Wednesday, March 1, 2006.

Botanical Resources

PPLM presented a weed management plan as a PM&E measure. The group agreed this is a good PM&E measure to develop. USFS (Kim Reid) and ERG (Melanie Smith) will work to modify and edit the proposed plan to add clarity and specificity regarding the inventory data such that it is collected in a format useable in the FS protocol. USFS will also add mitigation measures (e.g. chemicals, approaches, timing, etc.).

Final draft Weed Management PM&E will be provided to GEI (email to Ginger Gillin, ggillin@geiconsultants.com) by Wednesday, March 1, 2006.

Wildlife Resources

Grizzly Bear

The group agreed upon the proposed grizzly bear PM&E measures (bear resistant containers and bear aware signs) presented at the meeting. Bear resistant trash containers in recreational areas will be specified to the area around West Rosebud Lake (Re-regulation Dam) and the PPLM housing compound, which are both within the Project boundary (FERC's boundary). Currently, there are bear aware signs posted, the proposed PM&E measure will be phrased such that PPLM will collaborate with the USFS for any future maintenance or additional postings of bear aware signs within the Project area.

Bald Eagle

PPLM proposed that at the time when transmission lines (A and B lines) that extend from the Line Creek Substation to the Powerhouse, the distribution lines along the trail from the powerhouse to Mystic Lake, and distribution lines that extend along the flow line to the surge chamber are replaced, the new poles will be installed to raptor safe standards. In addition, USFS (Barb Pitman) will provide any additional specifics regarding improvements to lines to raptor safe standards around the PPLM housing compound.

USFS proposed a long-term monitoring PM&E measure to determine the presence of bald eagles and potential use of West Rosebud Lake (within the FERC boundary) between October 1 and February 28. The survey would extend from the Mystic Lake trailhead parking lot downstream to the outlet of Emerald Lake. PPLM agreed to incorporate this PM&E measure with some additional details to be provided by Barb Pitman (e.g. survey format).

Harlequin Duck

USFS proposed a monitoring PM&E to determine the presence of the harlequin duck. PPLM agreed to include this proposed PM&E measure with some modifications to the monitoring plan. Surveys would be conducted annually for the first five years, then survey incrementally in future years if warranted. This will allow any adaptive management and flexibility in the plan depending on whether the species is observed during the first five years of data collection. The survey will need to be conducted twice between May 1st and 25th with one week between surveys. The area to be surveyed was also defined to extend from the Forest Service boundary upstream to PPLM housing. Only West Rosebud Lake is in the FERC boundary. The USFS will provide a copy of the harlequin duck survey form.