

Mystic Lake Hydroelectric Project
Whitewater Resource Group
Conference Call – Annual Consultation Summary
June 17, 2014

All participated via conference line:

PPL Montana – Deb Mallowney

PPL Montana – Brent Mabbott

PPL Montana – Jon Jourdonnais

PPL Montana – Roscoe Kronfuss

American Lands – Nancy Johnson

American Lands – Bruce Bugbee

REC Resources – Jeff Frost

USFS – Jeff Gildehaus

MFWP – Ken Frazer

MFWP – Jason Rhoten

DNRC – Joel Harris

Beartooth Paddlers – Burgess Norrgard

Beartooth Paddlers – Ian McIntosh

American Whitewater – Kevin Colburn

The call began at 9:00 AM. Nancy Johnson confirmed those participating and reviewed items to be discussed: proposed changes to the protocol for whitewater flow enhancement, current inflow and elevation data for Mystic Lake, 2013 release information, and a 2014 update of the whitewater flow plan.

Nancy and Brent Mabbott PPLM reviewed proposed revisions to the protocol for whitewater flow enhancement on West Rosebud Creek, which would narrow the flow windows for releases by 20 to 24 cfs. Brent noted that some complaints had been received from kayakers on ‘boney’ (less than optimal) flows during 2012, prompting the proposed changes. These conditions can occur when inflow to West Rosebud Creek drops rapidly.

Burgess Norrgard, vice president for the Beartooth Paddlers, indicated that he had not received comments from group members on boney conditions during whitewater releases, and that a release target of 500 cfs was likely adequate for most paddlers. His preference for a minimum boatable flow was 450 cfs. Ian McIntosh asked whether advance notice could be provided when inflow to West Rosebud Creek drops rapidly. Burgess asked about the need to narrow the Wednesday and Friday flow windows currently specified in the protocol.

Brent Mabbott indicated the importance of measuring both Wednesday and Friday streamflows prior to a weekend with whitewater flow enhancements, and an option to keep protocol guidelines the same but add a cautionary note for less-than-optimal conditions when flows decrease rapidly.

Jon Jourdonnais PPLM asked whether other resources considerations were present for the proposed changes. Brent indicated that providing sufficient instream flows for kayakers on the second day of a 2-day weekend release was the primary consideration, and that no issues for fisheries are present.

Burgess indicated his preference for leaving the protocol unchanged and interest in providing optimal flows of approximately 430-500 cfs for kayakers on days with releases. He asked whether email notification could be provided when Sunday flow conditions are questionable. Roscoe Kronfuss PPLM noted the availability of USGS streamflow data as the best option to provide current streamflow trends.

Nancy confirmed the group consensus to make no changes to the flow windows currently specified in the protocol and add a cautionary note for less-than-optimal float conditions on Sundays when streamflow is rapidly decreasing.

Deb Mallowney, PPLM resource coordinator, reviewed inflow and elevation data for Mystic Lake. Deb indicated that May inflow to Mystic Lake averaged 204 cfs/day (146 percent of the 30-year average), with June inflow averaging 430 cfs/day through the 16th. Deb estimated July outflow at 375 cfs/day. The volume runoff forecast issued by the NRCS for June and July is 118 percent of normal. The Fisher Creek snowtel site reports 139 percent for the snow-water equivalent. Mystic Lake is currently 11 feet from full pool and is currently refilling at the rate of 1.5 feet per day. Roscoe noted that cool spring state weather has resulted in slower runoff rates statewide.

Jeff Frost reviewed the two weekends with whitewater flow enhancements in 2013 on July 13/14 and July 20/21. Each weekend had a two-day Saturday/Sunday release. Jeff observed that the protocol was working well, with whitewater flow targets of approximately 500 cfs and post-release instream flows of 200 cfs or greater being met.

Nancy reviewed the schedule for updating the Mystic Lake Whitewater Flow Plan this year, noting an initial request for comments on flow parameters in late July, a September meeting of stakeholders to review a draft plan, and a December submittal of the plan to FERC. Burgess requested a meeting location in Red Lodge, and Jon Jourdonnais suggested a conference line option for the meeting. Nancy also briefly reviewed the whitewater flow parameters that guide the protocol.

For additional information to group members, Roscoe noted the availability of registration cards for paddlers at the put-in near Emerald Lake, and the lack of completed cards on some weekends. Burgess indicated he would inform paddlers of these cards.

With no other topics for discussion, the consultation call ended at 9:45 AM.