

# Initial Study Report Meeting Mason Dam Hydroelectric Project

## March 20, 2008

### I. INTRODUCTIONS:

Jason Yencopal (Baker County Project Manager) Fred Warner (Baker County Commission Chair), Randy Joseph (Chair of Baker County Renewable Energy Committee) Army Grammon (Baker County Weed Control) Mike Hall (Lands Recreation Minerals for Forest Service) Gary Miller (US Fish and Wildlife Service in LaGrande) Collene Fagen (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in LaGrande) Mike Gerdes (Forest Service Hydro Power Coordinator for Wallowa Whitman National Forest) Leslie Gecy (Biologist and Hydrologist contracted for Baker County) Robert Ross (US bureau of Reclamation), Mary Grainey (Oregon Water Resource Department), Kenneth Hogan (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) , Emily Carter (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission), Carolyn Templeton (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission)

### II. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

No one had any additions to the agenda.

### III OVERVIEW OF THE FIRST FIELD SEASON:

Jason Yencopal gave a brief overview of study plans 1-7 the study plan field season was May – November 2007. The completed study plans during this season were 1-5. Study plan 6 and 7 were not completed during this time.

#### A. Study Plan 1- Dissolved Oxygen, Water Quality, and Temperature.

The field season was May 4- Oct 12, 2007.

We were about 2 weeks late starting this study as we had complications with the contractors. The actual ice off date was April 15. Jason took some training from the DEQ Lab in Portland and with Randy Joseph took over the study and collected the data. They missed a week of sampling three different times. We collected the data and then Ms. Leslie Gecy with Eco West helped interpret the data.

Leslie the biologist discussed the findings from the data that was collected from the reservoir. Leslie explained a couple of the trends that were found. The questions of the trends were; does the reservoir stratify, what are the temporal changes, temporal and vertical changes in temperature and DO. The answer is yes the temperature and the DO (dissolved oxygen) do change with depth and do change with month. Yes the reservoir does stratify. Leslie stated that the pertinent data is summarized in table 1. Leslie explained the graphs and figures.

#### DISCUSSION:

Colleen Fagen asked for the river mile locations for the sample sights. Jason told her that he only had Lat and Longs but he can get that information to her.

Jason stated that he had the weeks that were missed and they are as follows. July 9-15  
July 30-Aug 5 and Aug 27-Sept 2

Mary Grainey asked if the DO was mostly measured in the middle of the day. Jason advised that it was not. He stated that they started roughly 2 miles down stream from Mason dam a half-hour after sunrise, and be in the lake at about 8:00 am. It took them about 3 hours to measure from the starting point to the lake.

There was a request for a line on the figures to show the depth of the intake. Leslie stated that in appendix A it shows the depth of the intake. It was stated there needs to be an indicator added showing the depth of the intake.

Colleen asked why there was data that was discarded. Leslie explained that there was some data that was out of the realm of possibility. There was some information that showed a possible equipment error.

It was asked if there is intent to sample again this year. There is no intent to sample again this year.

**RESPONSE:**

As stated above Baker County is not going to conduct an additional sample season. The goal of this study was to gather baseline data, which was completed in the 2007 field season. Baker County will revise the draft report including the following information, a map showing the collection sites in river miles, add lines to the figures to show the depth of the intake, and the additional data collected at each site. DEQ has not been able to review the data, however we are trying to work with them in order receive their comments. A revised draft report will be completed by May 31<sup>st</sup> 2008, with a final report being completed once we are able to work with DEQ.

**B. Study Plan 2- Vegetation, Rare Plant and Noxious Weeds**

Baker County used the Baker County weed department to do this study.

The field season was May – November 2007. So far we have only put in our draft report. There have been comments received from FERC. The Forest Service has updated some of their lists. This may cause a change in the area of the mason dam study.

Colleen Fagen asked if there was still time to provide comments after this meeting. Jason advised that they would take the meeting notes, formulate what the feedback is and then there would be time for comments. Colleen stated that she has some comments on some of the studies that are being considered final. There will be 30 days after the meeting summary to give input regarding meeting summary and if there is a need for additional summary.

Mike Gerdes has a list of Forest Service noxious weeds to compare with Arny's county noxious weed list. Arny with the Baker County Weed Department was given the Forest Service list. Arny stated that there is already work being done at the sight. Arny stated that it is a County road and he sprays sight appropriate vegetation there. Arny stated that they are using Forest Service approved herbicides. The County and Forest Service want to work together on this. We need a weed management plan. This needs to be with the application when it is filed so that it can be reviewed and signed off.

Mike Gerdes stated that with the filing of a PLP there could be at least an outline for an integrated weed management plan and maybe more detail when the FLA is submitted. The time frame between the PLP and the issuance of the FLA is 90 days. There is still data to collect.

Jason stated that we will need to look at this and then just work with Forest Service to figure out how much more is needed this year. Arny stated that he would feel comfortable taking additional data now that he has the Forest Services weed list. Arny Grammon took data in June and August. He didn't have the Forest Service list at the time of his initial data collection. He would like to take some more data and make sure that the species on the list are not in the area. Can have the Forest Service botanist, Lynn Smith; go over the list with Arny regarding the scientific names etc.

Mike Gerdes stated the Forest Service went over the study plan and they agree with FERC regarding elements the goals and objectives that were not addressed in the draft study report. They concur with FERC that there was element of the work products that were not put in draft study report. FERC identified those and they were pretty much what we were looking at here. There were just a couple other bullets that I have

identified in addition to what FERC identified. Mike Gerdes was speaking on behalf of the Forest Service and he feels that there needs to be some more work. Carolyn Templeton with FERC asked what those additional points are. Mike Gerdes stated for example under work products one of the additional points is to provide complete descriptions and discussions of the various plant associations and their different seral stages within those plant associations. Mike stated that by early May will file his formal comments and they will be identified in there. Mike stated he would leave a copy with Jason so that he can review it to see the differences. Leslie pointed out that there are rare and sensitive species in study plan 3 so maybe there should be note in study plan 2 stating to look forward to plan 3. FERC stated that they are not against consolidating study plan 2 and 3. The Forest Service new list is a lot more comprehensive and is now including non vascular plants and invertebrates.

**RESPONSE:**

Baker County will need an additional field season to evaluate the new list screened down by the Forest Service. A revised draft study plan will be completed incorporating the comments received by FERC and the Forest Service as well as the additional data collected during the field season. This draft will be completed by October 31st 2008 and the final December 31<sup>st</sup> 2008. Due to the relationship between study plan 2 and 3, these may be consolidated in order to cover the data needed in these reports.

**C. Study plan 3 Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species Assessment**

Baker County hired Eco West to conduct this survey.

Leslie gave an overview of this study. There were 43 species

No invertebrates were listed on this study.

She looked at whether they would be disturbed by the noise of the hydro turbines and construction.

It was discussed that the Bald Eagle occurs here and 2 fish species bull trout or red band identified as being potentially there. Bald Eagle wasn't affected by the noise. Leslie analyzed the effects on the nesting and mating.

Colleen asked why wolves are not on the list. Leslie stated that at the time of the study wolves were not on the list of species. Gary with US Fish and Wildlife stated that unless there was going to be an impact of the wolf's prey then there wouldn't need to be anything done in regards to the wolves' habitat area.

Robert Ross suggested there needs to be mitigation regarding the irrigation water deliveries. Randy Joseph stated that the proposal is to use a self-cleaning screen for the migratory fish. Robert wants to get Rick Reeber from his agency involved to get a preliminary idea of what Baker County is considering. Some of the concerns that Robert Ross has is if there is a blockage in the screens that there will be a way to clean them so that irrigation water can flow to the district. Robert wants a guarantee that the irrigation water would not be affected.

Mike Gerdes stated that if this is as proposed mitigation than we should get some information on screen design. We need some discussion on what some of the different agency requirements are. FERC would expect that the plans that are submitted on the final license application or the PLP would be developed to make sure that everything is being addressed from the different agencies especially the Bureau of Reclamation.

Colleen stated there are red band trout present in the reservoir and the study plan stated that there is no known red band present. Colleen stated that the red band trout is present and the study report needs to be updated to indicate that.

Colleen also stated that the study reports states that the bull trout are not present in the Powder River, and they are present. She stated that they have been identified in the Haines area. Colleen wants this statement in the study plan to be more specific as to where it is saying there are no bull trout.

Colleen asked how far down stream is the Forest Service rock weir. It is 150 feet, the edge of the stilling basin.

Gary stated that there was a non-vascular specie that was taken from the list.

Colleen stated that the study plan states that the area was surveyed in October and found that there was no reptile or amphibian habitat. She asked if there would be any more studies preformed to verify that they are not present. Leslie stated that there is no frog habitat, there is no breeding habitat, and there is no winter habitat in the study area. Leslie felt that there was no need to conduct another study based on this information.

Leslie summed up the changes that are being requested. Mike Gerdes stated that the new species that have been identified needed to be added along with the red band trout etc. Leslie also asked Gary if the grey wolf should be added to the study as it is on the list. Gary stated that it would be good to address the grey wolf and all the species that are on the list. FERC wants all the species that are on the list it to be addressed.

#### RESPONSE:

At this time it is unknown if an additional field season will be needed until we receive the shortened list from the Forest Service. In the revised final study plan, wolves will be discussed and revision will be made to the comments on bull and red-band trout. This draft report will be completed by May 31<sup>st</sup> 2008 with the final be completed July 31<sup>st</sup> 2008. Due to the relationship between study plan 2 and 3, these may be consolidated in order to cover the data needed in these reports.

#### D. Study Plan 5. Recreation Visitor Survey and Use Study

The main study season was May 2007- November 2007. There was a trial survey in April to see how things would work. Road counters were used to collect data. They collected information on what sites are being used and whether it was on a weekday or weekend.

Mike Hall stated that the Forest Service wants a summary of the analysis to show how the county came to their conclusions.

The plan called for a traffic study on the Black Mountain road with traffic counter installed during the period of the year when the plan of construction would most likely occur. There is no data collected on this.

Jason stated that the road will not be closed they will just take it down to a single lane of traffic. This will only cause minor delays.

The Forest Service wants this fact stated in the plan.

The Forest Service doesn't have any use information to provide. The Forest Service did a general study of the whole forest. There was no site-specific use for that area.

During construction there will be some effects on recreation and those effects need to be stated.

Jason stated that the county needs to get with Forest Service and Road Dept. to correlate data. To decide when this construction should take place to set a date and decide what the road use is and what the effects will be.

**RESPONSE:**

Baker County feels that no additional surveying is needed. The data collected gave us a good representative sample for the recreating public. A link between the analysis of the data and the conclusion will be completed and be put in a draft report. This draft report will be completed on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2008 with a final report being completed on July 31<sup>st</sup> 2008.

- E. Study Plan 6. Assess Traditional Cultural Properties  
Will be doing this study this year. CTUIR (Confederated Tribes and Umatilla Indian Reservation) will be doing this study. This study will take place May 2008 through November 2008.

Mike Hall requested a copy of the agreement between Baker County and the CTUIR when it is signed. Mike Hall advised that CTUIR would need a special permit to do this study on Forest Service land.

- F. Study Plan 7 Assess Archaeological and Historic-Era Properties  
This plan will be done this year with the field season May-November 2008. A contractor assigned to this and she will get started as soon as the snow is gone. The Forest Service stated that she would need a permit. The information that is being collected is sensitive so the Forest Service wants to make sure that it is protected and controlled.

**IV. UPCOMING EVENTS**

Jason stated that April 4 the meeting summary is due so you can expect those notes from the county. We are working on an RFP to have someone come in and help us engineer this project so we may have additional questions.

Study plan 6 and 7 will start May and go to November

**V. CLOSING**

Jason asked for any final thoughts or suggestions.

Mike Gerdes stated that he found that it was difficulty to get a copy of some of the study plans. He requested an easier way to get this information out to everyone. It is the counties responsibility to get this out to everyone. Randy Joseph asked if the counties web site could be used to post it. It was agreed that the web site would be used to distribute the information. Jason would advise everyone when it has been added to the web site. Emailing it is an issue. Mike Gerdes stated that he still didn't have a complete study plan 1 or 2, he was handed a hard copy.

Ken Hogan stated that Baker County has an opportunity to respond to the requests made by the other agencies. They need to state whether they will do it or that it is not needed and this is due on June 4, 2007. By July 4 if there are any outstanding disputes the agency asked for something and Baker County doesn't feel that it is needed. FERC will make the final determination if something is needed or not needed.

Ken Hogan requested a meeting summary. Jason stated that he would be emailing all the agencies involved.

Jason wrapped up the meeting at 10:18 am