

MYSTIC LAKE PROJECT

Recreation, Land Use and Aesthetics Resource Group Final Conference Call Summary

Conference Call Date: February 14, 2006

Note from Jon Jourdonnais: The summary discussions presented below are a work in progress and do not reflect formal decisions made by PPLM or any agency or public group.

Participants via conference call:

PPL Montana – Jon Jourdonnais

PPL Montana – Lance Elias

USFS – Jeff Gildehaus

USFS – Jerry Bird

American Lands – Nancy Johnson

American Lands – Jeff Frost

American Whitewater – Kevin Colburn

Beartooth Paddlers – Ian McIntosh

Beartooth Paddlers – Ron Ladders

American Lands – Bruce Bugbee

Nancy Johnson facilitated the call. The purpose of the call was to review and discuss Mystic Project recreation, land use and aesthetics PM&E measures dated 2-6-06 as proposed by PPL Montana and provided to the group, and a whitewater proposal by American Whitewater dated 2-13-06 provided to the group. Nancy indicated that the first hour would be used to discuss the measures proposed to address whitewater resources.

The group discussed and commented on the following measures.

Installation of a USGS flow gage below the re-regulation dam, with readings posted to the USGS website, the PPLM Mystic Lake Project website, and the dam. (4A)

Jon provided an update on installation plans, with the USGS to visit the site below the re-regulation dam within the next few weeks and submit a proposal back to PPLM by early March. Jon would then send proposal to agencies for review and approval. Jon indicated that new gage operation was targeted for June 1 of 2006 following approvals, with possible early operation by May 15th.

Ron L clarified that the gage would be an USGS-installed and maintained gage. Jeff G asked about the power source for the gage, noting that Exhibit K shows an underground line from the 'B' transmission line to the re-reg dam. Jon answered that solar battery power could be used, with a radio link to satellite for operation. The USGS proposal would specify a preferred power source. Jon also indicated that alternatives were available to address aesthetic concerns.

Continue annual reporting of the Mystic Lake refill trajectory on the Mystic Project website. (4B)

Ian McI questioned whether PPLM would gather snow pack and inflow information for the whitewater consultation meeting planned for the beginning of a season. Jon indicated that they would.

Annual consultation process to review the West Rosebud runoff forecast and identify the likely timing and magnitude of whitewater boating flows and potential opportunities to manipulate flows. (4C)

Jon noted that the model for this proposed measure was an annual consultation process used to identify the feasibility of providing spring flushing flows on the lower Madison River. This annual consultation process has been used effectively for seven years by PPLM and agencies. Participants are PPLM, MDEQ, MFWP, FS and TU.

Ron L asked how often the Madison flushing goals had been achieved during this time period. Jon responded that a flushing flow was warranted in one year and that concerns such as spreading whirling disease and low flow years were considerations as to implementing it. Ron L asked whether NGOs or recreation rafting companies were involved in the consultation. Jon noted the participation of TU.

Lance E noted that a goal of consultation would be to use available water to its most effective purpose. Jon noted that water would be used for whitewater flows as conditions permitted, and that its use was resource dependent.

Ian McI noted agreement with the goal statement for this measure and the annual consultation process. But more specificity was needed to identify a certain number of days where whitewater flows would be provided.

Kevin C said that with an ownership change on a hydro project, interest in meeting this goal could change. The objective was to meet minimum interests for the whitewater resource over the term of the license. Jon noted that this measure would be written in such a way to make sure the desired result was attained. He stressed the need to learn from each other before communicating specific needs to FERC. Jon noted the ongoing monitoring of flow below the re-reg dam, with flow information from the new gage as an important component for adaptive management. This would supply information for balancing resource needs and identifying whitewater flows.

Ron L asked whether any operational change, such as a pneumatic lift gate at the re-reg dam, was being considered to enhance operational flexibility when providing whitewater flows. Jon replied that it would be possible to accommodate flow adjustments without changing current gates, and no change in the stop-log installation was planned at this point. Operators could consider better management options over time. Jon believed that studying amount of water released and balancing resource needs were more important considerations. Ron L asked for assurance that with no gate modifications currently being planned, any difficulty in actually accomplishing flow manipulation would not be used as a reason for failing to provide improved flows at the end of a boating season, even for a few hours on a weekend day.

Ron L asked about agency feedback on this measure. Nancy noted they were in the process of getting this feedback, and that agencies needed more time to study it. Also, MFWP and MDEQ were not present for this call. Jeff G noted that he had not seen the whitewater proposal, but the FS is interested in providing a spectrum of recreation opportunity. Jeff G said that it would be good to have a study period.

Lance E noted text in the AW proposal for use of measured snow pack in the Upper Yellowstone basin as a predictor of flow in West Rosebud Creek. Also, text in the PPLM measure specified 'May-July volume runoff forecasts for the West Rosebud drainage.' He explained that current volume-runoff forecasts provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) were for Mystic Lake reservoir inflow, and this was a better predictor of runoff. Following discussion on the importance of an independent measure for snow pack and runoff forecasts, Lance said that he would provide a website for the NRCS and a contact in Bozeman. Jon asked whether the spreadsheet provided by AW showing number of whitewater flow days correlated to snow pack should be recalculated based on records of inflow into Mystic Lake.

Jon stated the intent of PPLM to work to increase flows from the re-reg dam and meet whitewater goals on the downward trend of the hydrograph. He noted the opportunity to learn more about flows below the re-reg dam with the new gage, and to use this information to tune up operations in future years. Kevin C acknowledged the option of adjusting number of whitewater flow days, the minimum number of days with flows equal to or greater than 300 cfs, based on better information. Kevin also stated the need for some level of certainty in this measurement and the target whitewater flows. After more discussion, it was decided that Lance would study the flow spreadsheet provided by AW and work with Ian to develop another proposal for whitewater flows.

More discussion took place on development of a whitewater flow plan. Ron L noted that it would be possible to state goals that show a relationship to flows, i.e., whitewater releases proportional to forecast inflows into Mystic Lake. Jon suggested collecting several years of monitoring data, followed by filing of a whitewater plan with FERC in 2009 after 3 study years, with 5-year plan updates after that. Nancy will redraft this PM&E measure to incorporate these changes. Jerry Bird noted that this would be comparable to the process used on the Madison River that does work.

With the end of discussion on PM&E measures for whitewater resources, Kevin Colburn, Ian McIntosh, Ron Ladders and Lance Elias signed off. The remaining group discussed revisions to other measures proposed for recreation and aesthetics.

Discussion of Other PM&E Measures

The group discussed whether measures would be implemented under the new Project license or through a MOU between PPLM and agencies. Possible revision of the Project boundary for some measures was also discussed. Jon suggested that when a master list of all proposed measures was available after March 1st, that PPLM and the FS discuss these options and solicit input from FERC. Jerry Bird would check on the role of the BLM in revising the Project boundary. Funding of measures could also be discussed at this time.

Mystic Lake Trailhead maintenance and improvements. (1A-C)

- **Trailhead facility maintenance.**
- **Information and education materials.**
- **Increased parking capacity.**

Jeff G noted that any trailhead improvements would be driven by decisions on wilderness management. Jeff also noted that weekly cleaning of the vault toilet at the trailhead should include stocking of toilet paper. For I&E, additional signs could be added along the road adjacent to West Rosebud Lake to direct recreationists to parking areas.

Trail and backcountry maintenance and restoration activities. (2A-C)

- **Trail maintenance and restoration activities.**
- **Reconstruction of the bridge over West Rosebud Creek on the Mystic Lake Trail.**
- **Backcountry restoration activities at Mystic Lake.**

The group agreed to drop text noting a specific entity that would complete maintenance activities. Jeff G said text on trail maintenance should note restoration of the trail bed through the talus slopes and other heavy maintenance that would not occur on an annual basis. Jeff G noted that bridge reconstruction would occur within 5 years, with rebuilding to possibly include stock use. For restoration activity at Mystic Lake, the focus would be on the area within 200 feet of the shore. Jon noted that license measures would need to be updated with FERC on a 5-year interval. The timing of restoration activity at Mystic Lake was adjusted.

Day-use facility development and maintenance at West Rosebud Lake.

- **Development of a carry-in boat launch facility at West Rosebud Lake.**
- **Development of handicapped accessible fishing opportunities at West Rosebud Lake.**
- **Maintenance of day-use facilities at West Rosebud Lake.**

Discussion on these measures focused on possible revision of the Project boundary. Stocking of toilet paper would be added to O&M duties.

Long-term recreation use monitoring in the Project area, including periodic visitor surveys and road and trail use counts. (5)

No revisions were identified for this measure.

Consultation with the Forest Service when requested for aesthetic and design considerations related to maintenance or upgrades of Project facilities. (6)

The group agreed to drop reference to historic resources in this measure. Jeff G noted the need to maintain consistency with Forest Service Visual Quality Objectives on Project lands. Gerrish Willis had commented via email that consultation should occur as external project modifications are proposed by PPLM. Text for this measure would be revised to address comments.

The conference call ended at 11:30.