

MYSTIC HYDROELECTRIC FACILITY RELICENSING PROJECT

Recreation, Land Use and Aesthetics Resource Group

Final Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: October 21, 2003
Meeting Location: Sheraton Hotel, Billings, Montana

Note from Jon Jourdonnais: The purpose of today's (October 21) public meeting was to openly discuss 1) resource goals for the Mystic Project area, 2) possible resource impact study needs, 3) anticipated Project impacts to resources, 4) anticipated PM&E for Mystic Project resources and 5) determine a next meeting date and agenda for the group. The discussions presented below are a work in progress and do not reflect formal decisions made by PPLM or any agency or public group.

In attendance:

American Whitewater – John Gangemi
APLE Co. – Nancy Johnson, Jeff Frost, Bruce Bugbee
Custer National Forest– Jeff Gildehaus
Forest Service Regional Hydropower Team– Gerrish Willis and Jerry Bird
PPL Montana – Jon Jourdonnais

Nancy Johnson facilitated the meeting.

Review Agenda

Nancy reviewed the Mystic Resource Group (RG) Objectives as sent out to participants:
No additions or changes were made.

1. **Resource goals for the Mystic Project area:** Custer National Forest management area resource management goals were reviewed.
 - A. Management Area H surrounds Mystic Lake and part of trail corridor
 - Preserve wilderness characteristics for possible future designation as wilderness
 - Closed to motorized use except those uses authorized under special use permit including use of boat, helicopter, and chainsaws for project operation
 - B. Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness
 - Management plan addresses monitoring changes and tools used to address capacity
 - Mystic Lake is one of main portals to wilderness and Granite Peak
 - Other wilderness access in East Rosebud Creek and other sites (total of 14 trailheads) on Beartooth District
 - B. Management Area F
 - Provide spectrum of recreation opportunities in and around developed sites and access corridors to the National Forest.

- Aesthetics – proposed projects evaluated for VQO compatibility.
- Grazing permits in West Rosebud drainage. Permits are short-term and rotational, and are located from one mile north of Emerald Lake out to Forest boundary
- Boating on Emerald and West Rosebud Lakes - Boating regulations on Emerald Lake and West Rosebud Lake? (FWP)
- Campgrounds at Emerald Lake and Pine Grove will be maintained at current levels
 - i. Currently no expansion planned but reconstruction/heavy maintenance planned beyond 2008
 - ii. Forest Plan revision (2004-2008) may lead to a decision to increase campground capacity
 - iii. Effect of grizzly bear management on future campground expansion?

2. Possible Resource Impact Study Needs

A. Existing information

- 2001 Visitor Study (Pine Grove to Mystic Lake)
- USFS 2002 National Visitor Use Monitoring
 - useful in future for regional use trends
 - provides 2002 baseline
 - includes estimated trailhead use
 - Actual trailhead counts lacking
 - Whitewater use unknown on West Rosebud Creek
 - Possible sources for traffic counts
 - USFS traffic counts on West Rosebud Road?
 - MDOT PHF 83 Stillwater Road?
 - Stillwater traffic counts?
 - Fee records for Pine Grove Campground and Emerald Lake Campground

B. Study needs

- Traffic counters/infrared counters – quantitative use by site sampled. Information from counters will track trends over time to better answer capacity questions and obtain quantitative use by site.
- 2004 Study plans for identification of locations, installation, collection of information, frequency of data collection.
- Questions to answer over long-term
 - What are immediate recreation needs?
 - What are future recreation needs?
 - What is desirable?
 - Is recreation use in West Rosebud Creek at/above/below capacity?
- Analysis of whitewater boating potential
 - Hydrology analysis of West Rosebud Creek for white water boating
 - How does Mystic operation affect peak run-off
 - Flow data for stream
 - Overlay initial assessment of boatable flows
 - Determine if field studies are needed?
 - If so, single or controlled flow feasibility study with team of boaters/pre-selected flow/assessment form

3. Anticipated Project impacts to resources

A. Positive

- Re-reg dam has created a fishable pool at West Rosebud Lake
- Current Project operations have enhanced fishery for recreation use in upper drainage
- Fishing use occurs year-round
- Powerhouse/camp provides communication link to outside for search and rescue/fire
- Reduced potential for vandalism at trailhead with hydro staff in area
- Possible benefit to whitewater boating opportunities with current operation
- PPLM pays taxes to help maintain road

B. Negative

- Possible effect on whitewater boating opportunities (reduced spring run-off)
- Introduces motorized/man-made elements/facilities to landscape in close proximity to wilderness – possible noise intrusion, visual intrusion
- PPLM creates demand on public services -West Rosebud Road
- Some resource degradation from current recreation use (potentially project-enhanced) result in increased management needs:
 - bank/shoreline impacts
 - erosion,
 - trash

4. Anticipated PM&Es for Mystic Project resources

- Revise Special Use Permit to include distribution line to dam
- Re-issuing special use permit (concurrent with FERC license) would require evaluation of project compatibility with current Visual Quality Objectives (VQO) and Scenery Management System (SMS)
- Changing/evolving recreation uses require effective management to protect the resource
- Long-term use monitoring in project area (West Rosebud)
- Accessible facilities
 - o Fishing
 - o Segment of trail or trail spur
 - o Restrooms

5. Next meeting date and agenda for Resource Group

- Information gathering: PPLM (APLE Co.) will identify all existing recreation and land use information for the project area and continue making project area contacts.
- October 21st meeting notes to Resource Group by November 15, 2003
- Next meeting: Tuesday, January 20, 2004, Livingston (location TBA)
- Contact Beartooth Paddlers – participate in internet-based survey or other survey?
- Draft Study Plan for counters over the winter