Wildlife and Terrestrial Resource Group Meeting
October 21, 2003
Sheraton Hotel in Billings, Montana

Technical Group in Attendance:
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Resource Group Summary
On October 21, 2003 a public meeting was held in Billings, Montana regarding the FERC relicensing of Mystic Lake Hydroelectric Project (hereafter referred to as the Project) using the Integrated Licensing Process (ILP). The purpose of this 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.

Representatives from the U.S. Forest Service (Barb Pitman and Gerrish Willis) participated in the wildlife and terrestrial resource meeting. Barb Pitman, wildlife biologist for the Beartooth Ranger District provided an outline of terrestrial wildlife goals, anticipated project impacts to wildlife resources, possible study needs, and PM&E goals (Appendix A). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has regulatory mandates to address any potential issues related to Endangered Species Act, Section 7 (threatened and endangered species, and critical habitat). Through other means of communication prior to this meeting, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks stated they do not anticipate any wildlife-related issues for the Mystic Project at this time.

Overall goals identified by the USFS as presented to the wildlife and terrestrial resource group and discussed include:

(1) Protect Federally threatened and endangered species
ESA listed species in Stillwater county (location of the Project) include the grizzly bear (threatened), bald eagle (threatened), Canada lynx (threatened), and Gray wolf (non-essential experimental population).
(2) Protect migratory birds
(3) Protect U.S. Forest Service Sensitive Species and Montana Species of Concern: Northern Goshawk, Wolverine, Northern Leopard Frog, Boreal Toad
Potential Sensitive Plant Species (Appendix B):
(4) Maintain prey base and water quality for raptors and waterfowl
(5) Protect/enhance riparian and wetland habitats associated with amphibians, neotropical birds, and water quality needs in the West Rosebud drainage

Potential concerns presented by the USFS and discussed for wildlife and terrestrial resources include:

(1) Raptor electrocutions and collisions
(2) Impacts to prey base for raptors and waterfowl
(3) Potential impacts to riparian and wetland habitats

USFS possible wildlife and terrestrial studies were sorted by primary and secondary study needs and include the following:

<u>Primary Study Needs:</u>

(1) Raptor electrocution hazards and collisions at the Project
   a. Transmission lines will be upgraded to raptor-safe standards in 2004 by PPL Montana
   b. Distribution lines will need to be investigated for potential impacts
(2) Amphibian Surveys in the Project area, Dennis Flath will be contacted
   a. Identify whether habitat for the northern leopard frog and/or boreal toad exist
   b. Identify whether northern leopard frog and/or boreal toad are present
(3) Wetland Surveys
   a. Inventory of plant community (check for any sensitive species)
   b. Inventory of impacts from project operations (e.g. peak flows, timing of inundation)
   c. Inventory of impacts from livestock grazing
(4) Riparian Surveys
   a. Inventory of riparian community (e.g. status and impacts)
   b. Inventory of impacts from project operations (e.g. peak flows, timing of inundation)
   c. Inventory of impacts from livestock grazing

(5) Knowledge of current/proposed studies regarding fisheries and water quality, and potential PM&E projects that could directly or indirectly impact wildlife and terrestrial resources

Possible Secondary Study Needs:

(1) Waterfowl survey
(2) Big game survey
(3) Bat survey (at Project Buildings)

USFS recognized goals for protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E):

(1) Reduce/eliminate raptor electrocution and collision hazards
(2) Protect/enhance aquatic water quality and prey base
(3) Where warranted, provide for amphibian life cycle needs via reservoir or flow management including riparian enhancement
(4) Identify and reduce noxious weeds within the Project boundary (Appendix C)

Two questions for consideration in the next Wildlife RA meeting:

1. Sensitive Plants. How should we address potential sensitive plant species? Should we conduct a more in depth literature study and characterize Project Area habitats to determine potential for the existing sensitive species habitat in or adjacent to the project boundary? If potential exists, then scoping for field studies can be addressed, possibly in conjunction with amphibian, riparian, wetland and other studies.

2. Noxious Weeds. Noxious weeds are only mentioned in the PM&Es. Do we need to gather more data on noxious weeds? Conduct surveys?

Appendix A – Information provided at meeting by Barb Pitman, Custer National Forest, Beartooth Ranger District.

MYSTIC PROJECT RELICENSING - WILDLIFE

1) Terrestrial Wildlife Goals:

- Provide for protection of federally threatened, endangered and proposed species and their habitat in accordance with the Endangered Species Act.
- Provide for protection of migratory birds and their habitat in accordance with the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- Provide for protection of eagles and their habitat in accordance with the Bald Eagle Protection Act
- Provide for protection of Forest Service sensitive species and their habitat in accordance with Forest Service Manual 2600, Chapter 2670 – Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plants and Animals
- Provide for protection of Management Indicator Species and their habitat in accordance with the Custer National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
- Maintain or improve prey base for bald eagles, osprey, waterfowl, and other aquatics-dependent species.

2) Anticipated Project Impacts to Wildlife Resources

- Raptor electrocutions
- Effects to prey base for aquatics-dependent species

3) Possible Study Needs

Priority 1

- Raptor use of facilities, and extent, if any, of raptor electrocutions
- Bald eagle and osprey surveys, including season, extent, and type of use, and impacts of recreation and other human presence
- Amphibian surveys

Priority 2

- Waterfowl surveys
- Bat surveys, in power house and other potential habitat
- Historical (pre-project construction) vs current use of drainage by big horn sheep and elk

4) Impact-related protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) goals

- Reduce or eliminate raptor electrocutions (reconfigure or retrofit power lines and power poles where electrocution potential occurs)
- Protect, and enhance if possible, conditions for prey species that support aquatics-dependent wildlife such as bald eagles, osprey, and waterfowl.

Appendix B – Potential Sensitive Plant Species

Beartooth District Sensitive Plants
Potentially present in Project Area
(R1 1999 List)[1]

Common Name	Scientific Name	Elevation	Habitat	Closest known population	Flowering Period	Fruiting Period	Lifeform
False helliborine	*Epipactis gigantea*	2,900 – 6,200	Streambanks, fens with springs/seeps, often near thermal waters	Bluewater Fish Hatchery – approx. x air miles	June – Early August	June – Early August	Perennial Forb
Small yellow lady's slipper	*Cypripedium parviflorum*	2,520 – 6,200	Fens, damp mossy woods, seepage areas, and moist forest-meadow ecotones in valley to lower montane	Stillwater Co. (State)– approx. x air miles	May-June	July	Perennial Forb
Hiker's gentian	*Gentianopsis simplex*	4,460 – 8,400	Fens, meadows, and seeps, usually in areas of crystalline parent material, in the montane and subalpine zones	East Rosebud – approx. x air miles	July - August	July - August	Small Annual Forb
Hall's rush	*Juncus hallii*	4,000 – 8,860	Moist to dry meadows and slopes from valley to montane	Gallatin NF – approx. x air miles	July - August	July - August	Perennial grass-like
Barratt's willow	*Salix barrattiana*	6,800 - 10,500	Forms extensive thickets in alpine habitats. Grows on boggy meadows, moist open hillsides in mountains, lakeshores, streambanks, rock slides and recent alluvial deposits. Soils range from very calcareous to very acidic.	Line Cr Plateau – approx. x air miles	July - August	July - August	Shrub
Musk-root	*Adoxa maschatellina*	4,400-6,000	Vernally moist places in the mountains at the bottom of undisturbed, open rock slides that have cold air drainage.	East Rosebud Creek and Spread Creek – approx. x air miles.	June-early July	Through July	Musky-scented Perennial Forb

[1] Wolf's Willow (*Salix wolfii var. wolfii*) was listed on the R1 1999 sensitive plant list, but is no longer being tracked by the region or MT Natural Heritage due to hybridization issues.

Appendix C – Noxious Weeds

Below is a list of noxious and invasive weeds present in the project area. Currently, the Forest Service sprays along the forest road, spurs, and campgrounds for all of the noxious weeds listed. The Forest Service does not spray at the compound surrounding the Powerhouse or the 3 mile trail leading to Mystic Lake. (personal comm. S. Monahan, Beartooth Ranger District and K. Reid, Custer National Forest, 10/23/03) Noxious weeds (i.e. knapweed) are sprayed annually by American Enterprises, Inc (AEI) on the PPL compound. Canada thistle has also been observed and sprayed at the Lake house (personal comm. D. Robinson, PPL Montana 10/24/2003).

Noxious Weeds

Common Name	Scientific Name
Canada Thistle	*Cirsium arvense*
Spotted Knapweed	*Centaurea maculosa*
Dalmation Toadflax	*Linaria dalmatica*
Sulfur (Erect) Cinquefoil	*Potentilla recta*
Common Tansy	*Tanacetum vulgare*
Houndstongue	*Cynoglossum officinale L.*
Yellow Toadflax	*Linaria vulgaris*

Invasive Weeds

Common Name	Scientific Name
Cheatgrass	*Bromus tectorum*