

**Wildlife and Terrestrial Resource Group
Technical Group Scoping Meeting
January 21, 2004
Best Western in Livingston, Montana**

Technical Group in Attendance:

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Resource Group Summary

On January 21, 2004 a public meeting was held in Livingston, 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) impact issues from the Project, 2) what type of simple data analysis or field work could be conducted in the summer of 2004, 3) whether there are any significant study needs for 2005 or 2006, 4) impact issues that can be resolved by long-term monitoring or an adaptive management plan, 5) impact issues that can be resolved by PM&E measures, and 6) determine next meeting date. The discussions presented below are a work in progress and do not reflect formal decisions made by PPLM or any agency or public group.

Wildlife Biologists Barb Pitman (U.S. Forest Service) and Dennis Flath participated in the wildlife and terrestrial resource meeting. 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.

The meeting commenced with a review of topics covered on October 31, 2003 and including additional information. Sensitive species list was extended to include Montana State sensitive species Boreal owl and Great Grey owl. However, the Project is not expected to have direct impacts on these species.

1) Potential Impact Issues from the Project:

- a. Raptor electrocution/collision with transmission/distribution lines
- b. Riparian/Wetland Habitat (critical habitat for many wildlife species)
 - i. Lower Reach (bypass reach is mostly bedrock, riparian corridor is limited)
 - ii. Cottonwood community downstream of Forest Service Boundary (mostly private lands)
 - 1. Currently, not enough information available on cottonwood in the lower W. Rosebud Creek drainage to determine potential operational impacts, if any exists
- c. Sensitive amphibian species (Boreal toad and northern leopard frog)
 - i. No data available yet on presence or absence of species in drainage
- d. Bats
 - i. Project may enhance habitat by providing facilities for roosting and increasing surface area of water availability in W. Rosebud Lake from re-reg dam.

2) Preliminary Study: Prior to summer 2004:

- a. Riparian Condition
 - i. Current and historic aerial photos of W. Rosebud Creek drainage (includes private lands)
 - ii. Compare historic to current riparian condition
 - iii. Detect impacts from grazing/disturbance vs. project related

3) Preliminary studies in 2004

a. Early/Mid-May 2004

- i. Amphibian survey
 - 1. presence/absence of adult toads based on vocal identification
 - 2. presence/absence of potential amphibian habitat
 - a. survey of shoreline at W. Rosebud Lake, Emerald Lake and other ponds
- ii. Riparian/Wetland Habitat
 - 1. survey of riparian corridor in lower reach (below bypass)
 - a. riparian community
 - b. riparian age structure
 - c. riparian condition/disturbance including non-project related effects such as agriculture and grazing
 - 2. survey songbirds, waterfowl in riparian, wetlands, & lakes
 - a. vocal and visual detection
- iii. Bat surveys
 - 1. presence/absence using bat detector
 - a. anecdotal survey including limited use of bat detector during amphibian habitat survey in May and interviews of project personnel

iv. Distribution Lines

1. identify any special areas of concern, or additional PM&E measures that could be taken to protect raptors
 - a. identify areas for electrocution prevention
 - b. identify areas of potential unusual collision risk
 - c. evaluate issue of aesthetics in wilderness area versus addition of collision prevention mitigation (e.g. large orange balls on wires)

b. Summer 2004

- i. Survey for potential sensitive plant species
 1. none identified in wetland habitat (Jones et al. 2001)
 2. other areas (riparian corridor) have not been surveyed
 3. conduct sensitive plant survey during bloom season (June-July) by USFS inside project boundary

4) Long-term monitoring needs:

- a. Not known until Preliminary studies in May and summer are complete
 - i. Potential need to revisit amphibian presence if habitat exists but animals are absent.

5) Impacts resolved from PM&E measures

- a. Raptors electrocution/collision
 - i. Transmission lines will be updated to raptor standards in spring 2004 (PM&E)
 - ii. Distribution lines will be looked at in the field, May 2004, and any additional needs for PM&E's will be discussed at this point

6) Next meeting date:

- a. No meeting scheduled
- b. Group will remain in contact via email/phone
- c. Next meeting will be early/mid-May for preliminary study
 - i. Dennis Flath will work up an itinerary for accomplishing objectives listed for early/mid-May trip (approximately 2 days) to W. Rosebud Creek drainage

7) Unanswered questions or information needs:

- a. Aerial photos of W. Rosebud Creek drainage prior to re-reg dam (Barb Pitman)
- b. Horse access to Mystic Trailhead (Barb Pitman)
- c. Pesticide use in the Project area (Kristi Overberg)
- d. Copy of frog calls for Barb Pitman and Kristi Overberg (Dennis Flath)
- e. Determine date, number of days, and number of people needed for Mystic trip in May 2004