

PPL MONTANA, LLC
THOMPSON FALLS UPSTREAM FISH LADDER PROJECT
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
January 26, 2011 @ 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Office, Missoula, Montana

PPL Montana, LLC held the Thompson Falls Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on January 26, 2011 at the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Office in Missoula. The meeting started at 10:00 AM and was adjourned at 1:30 PM.

MEETING ATTENDEES

Name	Agency	Email
Brent Mabbott	PPL Montana, LLC	lbmabbott@pplweb.com
Frank Pickett	PPL Montana, LLC	fjpickett@pplweb.com
Jon Jourdonnais	PPL Montana, LLC	jhjourdonnais@pplweb.com
Steve Leathe	PPL Montana, LLC	saleathe@pplweb.com
Andy Welch	MDEQ	awelch@mt.gov
Wade Fredenberg	USFWS	Wade_fredenberg@fws.gov
Jim Vashro	MFWP	jvashro@mt.gov
Jon Hanson	MFWP	jonhanson@mt.gov
Jay Stuckey	MFWP	jstuckey@mt.gov
Ladd Knotek	MFWP	lknotek@mt.gov
Rob Roberts	Trout Unlimited	rroberts@tu.org
Heather Whiteley	Trout Unlimited	hwhiteley@tu.org
Ginger Gillin	GEI Consultants	ggillin@geiconsultants.com
Kristi Webb	Morrison-Maierle, Inc.	kwebb@m-m.net

Meeting Objective

The goal of the meeting was to review the schedule for ladder operations in 2011, review 2010 activities for reporting to FERC in the Annual Report, review 2011 proposals for TAC funding, and discuss 2011 schedule for proposed activities.

Ladder Operations Update

PIT Tag Antennas Installed

- Weir 7 & 8
- Weir 45

Pre-Start Up Activities

- Review operations and maintenance with GEI
- Review job safety procedures
- Phone Sheet will be onsite with all emergency numbers
 - **Cell Phone Dedicated for Ladder Operators at Site is (406) 270-7207**
- First aid kit will be onsite
- Hard hats not required when working on ladder. If personnel are working on the dam structure, then hard hats are required.

Start Up

- GEI (Chad Masching) and Jeff Monaco (superintendent of Ladder construction for COP) will assist PPL MT start up ladder the week of March 14, 2011.
- March 15 – Water flowing in ladder.
- Ginger will be on site to assist with data collection protocol during start up.
- May have contractor out onsite to check operations periodically.

Planned Operations Schedule 2011

- March 15 – Water Flowing
- March 16 – Start Checking for Fish
- GEI (Ginger Gillin) – onsite March 16/17 to check data collection
- Data collection will commence
- Log Sheet for Ladder Checks
- Spring (March 15 – May 15, 2011)
 - Check ladder twice a day (<20,000 cfs spill), (45,000 cfs total flow)
 - Evaluate need to check more frequent
 - Check Saturday morning
 - Check Sunday evening
 - Brent scheduled to be onsite first 2 months
 - Running total of fish caught
 - Total fish caught per day
 - Update at public platform
 - Once there is high water, check ladder once a day
 - When spill exceeds 20,000 cfs over main channel dam
- Summer (July and August)
 - Checking fish ladder twice daily (day and night) in summer (following high water) and then every 2 hours throughout night time
- Fall
 - Checking fish ladder twice a day (when water cools)
 - Duration of operations in fall will depend on which fish are permitted to pass by MFWP
 - Duration of operations in fall also dependent upon weather and freezing issues
- Winter
 - Ladder needs to be winterized prior to freezing (likely prior to November 1)
 - Winterizing will also be determined by fish movement (or lack of movement)
- Anticipate a “wall” of fish mid-April to May
 - Have 3 people onsite to work up fish during this time
- Brent on operations for the first 2 years (2011 and 2012) and evaluated ladder operation needs for future
- Evaluating option to install a fish counter at v-trap at pool 45 and holding pool 46
 - Evaluate model type, costs, feasibility
 - Evaluate whether this is feasible and whether can be installed for 2011 or 2012 season
- PPL MT will provide weekly updates summarizing the status of upstream fish passage on the project website.
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Note: Steve Rainey will be providing a training class (May 4 and 5, 2011) for upstream fish passage. Information available at: <http://www.eosalliance.org/schedule/event/upstream-fish-passage-fish-behavioral-engineering-and-related-considerations>

2010 Annual Report

- **Finished Construction of Ladder in 2010**
- **Completed 5 reports in 2010**
 - 2009 Annual Report
 - Submitted to FERC on March 18, 2010, accepted by FERC July 13, 2010
 - Reservoir Plan (5-year) 2011-2015
 - Submitted to FERC on June 17, 2010
 - Fish Passage Evaluation (10-year) 2011-2020
 - Submitted to FERC on October 14, 2010
 - Fishway Operations Manual (SOP)
 - Submitted to FERC on December 15, 2010
 - Total Dissolved Gas (TDG) Plan
 - Not filed with FERC, only submitted to DEQ

2010 Annual Report – Tasks and Schedule

- GEI to submit draft 2010 Annual Report soon for 30-day USFWS review
 - Due to FERC on April 1, 2011
- Annual Report includes the following:
 - Summary of Previous Year
 - Plan for Coming Year
 - Incidental Take Statement for BLT handled in Previous Year
- Summary of 2010 TAC Funded Projects
 - Fish Creek and Oregon Gulch – Trout Unlimited (Rob Roberts)
 - Fish Creek Watershed Rehabilitation Project
 - Worked on 5 of 6 priority areas in Fish Creek Watershed
 - Decommissioned 77 miles roads
 - Removed 44 culvert removals
 - 15 acres of revegetation
 - Oregon Gulch
 - Installed groundwater wells and monitored in summer and fall 2010
 - 700 ft reach of 1800 ft channel area with dewatering concerns
 - Evaluating results from groundwater wells and then channel design
 - Private landownership issues
 - Private landownership does not have access to downstream portion of property
 - Cannot get access from USFS
 - Spend 2011 – working with private landownership to develop an agreement with TU before moving forward with project
 - Finalize design in 2011 and look to construct in 2012
 - Bulk of TAC Funding from 2010 not spent
 - Big Rock Creek – MFWP (Jon Hanson)
 - PPL Funded \$6,000, MFWP spent approximately half of the TAC funding
 - Rehabilitated area where riparian road washed out
 - Sampled the entire drainage
 - Tributary located in upper drainage of Thompson River
 - 17 BLT observed in entire drainage

- BLT present in 2/3 of drainage
 - 2-3 BLT in each section
 - 11 sites evaluated
 - MFWP continuing to monitor and sample drainage
 - Free passage through drainage
- 2010 Genetics Sampling
 - 2010 TAC funding not used in 2010
 - Recommend maintaining fund available for 2011
- Annual Sampling at Reservoir Thompson Reservoir and Clark Fork River – Jay Stuckey
 - Spring Electroshocking Thompson Falls Reservoir (Pond) April 28 and 29, 2010
 - 33 trout (WCT, RNB, Brown)
 - 13 YOY Northern Pike
 - Fall Gillnetting
 - October 14 – 15, 2010
 - Record low of total fish caught
 - 50 fish and 9 species
 - No black bullheads in 2010 (and none in 2009)
 - 2008 (drafted reservoir for dam repair)
 - 2004-2008 black bullheads had been dominant species
 - Night Electroshocking - Upstream of Thompson River Islands (3 mile section)
 - First Sampling Year was in 2009
 - Second Year Sampling on October 12 and 13, 2010
 - 488 fish, 11 species in 2010
 - One 325 mm BLT collected in first night
 - BLT not PIT tagged
 - Genetic sample taken, waiting for assignment from Avista
 - Released live
 - 699 fish, 11 species in 2009
 - Mostly riverine vs. reservoir habitat
 - Electroshocking near Paradise (4 mile section)
 - Riverine system (Plains boat access near fairgrounds upstream to Paradise)
 - First Sampling Year - October 19, 2010
 - 421 fish, 9 species
 - 43 rainbow and 17 WCT, 166 northern pikeminnow, 94 largescale sucker, 85 mountain whitefish
 - Sampling protocol has been set up for 5 years (2010-2015) and then PPL MT, FWP and TFalls Fisheries TAC will re-evaluate data needs.
 - MFWP Transported 4 BLT in 2010
 - Summary of 2010 data will be in the Annual Report
 - 2011- all Region 4 fish will be released below Thompson Falls Dam unless caught late in season. Specific release location to be determined.
- Water Quality Monitoring – Frank Pickett
 - TDG Report completed and submitted to MDEQ in 2010
 - Protocol for opening spillway panels for 2011 (See handout)
 - Reporting – TDG results will be included in the Annual Report for 2011 activities
 - No water temperature monitoring proposed for 2011

2011 Tasks and Schedule

Reservoir and River Monitoring (Brent Mabbott and Jon Hanson)

- Continue with the same sampling locations as was completed in 2010
- March – PIT tags downstream of dam (high bridge to dam)
 - May PIT tag more than salmonids
- Elastomer tags available for implanting at ladder work station
 - Color for 2011 not designated yet
- 2011 GBT monitoring will be dependent on spring flows
 - If high water is 55,000 cfs or higher, then PPL MT will proceed with shocking for GBT monitoring
 - Sampling location will be from below the powerhouse to the high bridge
 - PPL MT will also monitor at ladder for GBT, but unlikely to have fish in ladder

2011 Proposals for TAC Funding

- Genetics TAC Funding Remain Available for 2011 - \$5,000 Funding Remains
- 2011 \$170,000 TAC Funding Available
 - Spent about \$130,000 for the last 2 years
 - Maximum \$250,000 for funding
 - Open to submit proposals to TAC year-round

Ladder Monitoring (Brent Mabbott)

- Every Tuesday switch orifice to weir (start with orifice)
- 4 hours to drain ladder to switch from weir to orifice, 25 minutes from orifice to weir
- Pools with antennas will be in orifice opening only until antennas can be placed to accommodate weir setting

TASKS FROM MEETING

GEI/MMI

- GEI to submit draft 2010 Annual Report to TAC and USFWS for 30-day review
- Final 2009 Annual Report due to FERC on April 1, 2011

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- Brent to provide ladder operations schedule to GEI/MMI

MFWP

- Request was made for MFWP to provide written letter describing fish to pass and not pass for distribution to TAC.
- Regions 1 and 2 have submitted draft fish passage policy to Helena. Fish Health meeting tomorrow, January 27, 2011. MFWP waiting for final decision.

MFWP DIRECTION ON FISH PASSAGE AT LOWER CLARK FORK DAMS FOR 2011

- **Cabinet Gorge Dam:**
 - Bull trout may be passed in accordance with protocols stipulated by the AVISTA mitigation program and the FWP Import Permit. This does not include bull trout captured/passed from below Albeni Falls Dam, which will not be allowed.
 - Passage will not be allowed for any other species, including westslope cutthroat trout.
- **Noxon Rapids Dam:**
 - Bull trout translocated from below Cabinet Gorge Dam may be passed with protocols stipulated by the AVISTA mitigation program and the FWP Import Permit. This does not include bull trout captured/passed below Albeni Falls Dam, which will not be allowed.
- **Thompson Falls Dam:**
 - Bull trout translocated from below Cabinet Gorge Dam may be passed with protocols stipulated by the AVISTA mitigation program and the FWP Import Permit. This does not include bull trout captured/passed from below Albeni Falls Dam, which will not be allowed.
 - All species may be passed, except for walleye and lake trout, which must be killed upon capture.

NEXT TAC MEETING 2011

- Meeting in Thompson Falls on April 26, 2011 at 10:00AM. Meet at Ladder.