



# Meeting Notes

Project: <b>Loup River Hydroelectric Project</b> FERC Project No. 1256	
Subject: <b>Study 8.0: Recreation Use</b>	
Meeting Date: <b>January 14, 2010</b> <b>2:30 PM – 4:30 PM</b>	Meeting Location: <b>Conference Call</b>
Notes by: <b>HDR</b>	

## Attendees:

Randy Thoreson – NPS  
Jeff Schuckman – NGPC  
Dave Tunink – NGPC

Rick Holland – NGPC  
Mark Ivy – FERC  
Ron Ziola – LPD

Jim Frear – LPD  
Quinn Damgaard – HDR  
Ellen Fitzsimmons – HDR

A meeting was held between the Loup Power District (the District), the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), HDR Engineering (HDR), the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), and the National Park Service (NPS) to finalize methods for data collection activities associate with Study 8.0: Recreation Use.

## Meeting Agenda:

1. Trail Counters
2. Phone Survey Timing
3. Creel Survey Clerk Training
4. Clarification of Study Plan Determination Comments on Survey Questions
5. Survey Methods along Bypass Reach and at Loup Lands WMA
6. General Recreation Use Survey Schedule
7. Other (Non-Agenda Discussion)

## Discussion:

HDR began the meeting with introductions. Discussion of issues is summarized by agenda topic below.

### 1. Trail Counters

In the meeting invitation, HDR provided an informational brochure on the TRAFx Infrared Trail Counter Generation III that the District is proposing to use for trail count activities. In an off-line email, prior to the meeting, FERC noted "TrailMaster" as alternative equipment. FERC was concerned about the TRAFx equipment not counting cyclists and volunteered that the Trailmaster equipment has been used successfully in other studies. HDR will contact TRAFx to verify the ability of the equipment to detect cyclists and let FERC and NPS know the result of the inquiry. FERC will forward HDR a list of the specific Trailmaster equipment that would be required of the study. FERC noted that some time will need to be built into the count schedule to assure that the counters are calibrated correctly and accurately record data.

The counters will be placed along Two Lakes Trail, Bob Lake Trail, and Robert White Trail. The TRAFx package includes three counters, which would be placed in the middle of each of the three trails. Counter location would be consistent throughout the entire survey period. All participants were in agreement with the proposed methods. FERC suggested that an inquiry be made as to how the trails are used by each type of user (walkers/cyclists and whether the use is a loop or out-and-back). The results of this determination would derive a formula which would account for out-and-back users that pass the counter twice.

## 2. Phone Survey Timing

HDR inquired on whether or not any agencies had specific preferences as to when the phone survey would occur, with the understanding that it must occur during a point in 2010 to allow sufficient time to review survey results and determine whether or not the response warrants an extension of the overall Recreation Use Study – beyond October 31, 2010. No agencies had any preference and it was generally agreed that the survey would occur in the spring/summer.

## 3. Creel Survey Clerk Training

During preparation of the Proposed Study Plan, NGPC initiated the idea of holding creel survey clerk training at their Norfolk Office, prior to the initiation of the creel survey. With this in mind, HDR inquired about NGPC's ability to perform this training and when it should occur. NGPC noted that training activities could occur during a meeting intended to fine tune Recreation Use data collection methods (and discussed in Section 7, below). NGPC noted that they have training manuals that can be used in training activities.

## 4. Clarification of Study Plan Determination comments on Survey Questions

FERC asked if the changes they proposed in the Study Plan Determination have been incorporated into the survey forms. HDR indicated that the FERC-recommended revisions have been reviewed and incorporated into the forms. Upon FERC request, HDR agreed to forward the revised forms to FERC and NPS via email. The phone survey was revised to indicate that demographic information will be collected for all respondents completing the survey. Question strings A (familiar with Loup sites and use Loup sites), B (familiar with Loup sites but do not use Loup sites), and C (not familiar with Loup sites) will all conclude with demographic questions.

## 5. Survey Methods along the Loup River Bypass Reach and Loup Lands WMA

The District is proposing a mail-back windshield visitor survey for the subject locations and referenced that this method has recently been approved by FERC during their Study Plan Determination of the Merced Irrigation District FERC Relicensing Project (FERC No. 2179). According to this method, a mail-back survey would be placed on the windshields of vacant vehicles parked at publicly accessible access points along the Loup River Bypass Reach. The District proposes to perform this activity on four weekend days between May 1 and July 4. If considerable use is noted during the four proposed surveys, the District would then entertain extending the survey.

The survey forms would be tailored to include activities associated with the Bypass Reach, and the survey would take place on different days than the recreation survey to occur within the Project Boundary.

FERC stated that the Bypass Reach survey should be comparable to the survey proposed within the Project Boundary. Similarly, NGPC was concerned with the limited survey scope. HDR stated that based on the lack of use documented during the NGPC 1996 and 1997 creel surveys performed along the Bypass Reach and the minimal flows known to occur within the Bypass Reach during the irrigation season, a limited survey was adequate for the Bypass Reach.

FERC and NGPC also expressed some concern that by limiting the survey to users or vehicles located at publicly accessible access points, the survey may not accurately depict use along the Bypass Reach. To address this concern, FERC and NGPC suggested that an airboat could be used to expand the survey capabilities. FERC then went on to request study plans (including cost estimates) for both an access survey and a survey that includes the use of air boats. In calculating costs, NGPC suggests that a minimum of six survey days be proposed per month. In response to this request, HDR stressed that the proposed access method is consistent with that used on the Bypass Reach by NGPC in 1996 and 1997, that the windshield method is consistent with methods recently approved on other FERC projects, and that on page 26 of FERC's Project-specific Study Plan Determination, FERC specifically states that a survey will occur at the access points along the Bypass Reach that receive the highest recreational use. The District went on to state that they neither own, nor have access to, an airboat.

It was ultimately determined that the District will provide a more-detailed plan on the proposed survey methods along the Bypass Reach.

## 6. Recreation Use Survey Schedule

As noted in more detail below, the survey schedule was developed by NGPC in association with Study 9.0 of the Proposed Study Plan and would be applied to the combined study detailed in the Revised Study Plan; however, October is not included in this schedule. The group agreed that this schedule was sufficient with the caveat that a schedule for survey activities during October would need to be determined.

## 7. Other (Non-Agenda Discussion)

Considerable discussion occurred regarding the methods and processes detailed in Study 8.0 of the Revised Study Plan and regarding the combining of the Recreation User Survey and the Creel Survey into one comprehensive study.

FERC inquired on the interview selection protocol that would be applied when more recreational users are present then can be interviewed. HDR stated their awareness of FERC's provided example of every seventh user interviewed and noted this was acceptable to the District and would be applied.

Anglers would get a dual survey (recreation and creel).

Jeff Schuckman expressed concern with the proposed method and the lack of an instantaneous count (for use in creel analysis). HDR expressed that this method was discussed and agreed upon in previous agency meetings attended by NGPC fisheries staff and that the exclusion of an instantaneous count is specifically noted in the Revised Study Plan. Rick Holland explained that there are two ways to perform a creel survey, one of which includes a bus route survey, which is consistent with the methods proposed by the District and does not require an instantaneous count. In accordance with this method, the study area would be divided into segments which would each be allocated a designated survey time, based on understood use/pressure. The four segments labeled in Figure 9-1, Study 9.0 Creel Survey of the District's Proposed Study Plan were agreed upon as applicable to this type of combined bus route survey. Survey proctors would move through a segment in a linear fashion and would count and interview users as they are encountered. It was noted that effort should be made to randomize the time when survey segments are visited such that the same locations are not continuously visited during the same time of day. NGPC noted that they were aware of software that could accommodate a bus route survey; otherwise, NGPC software may still apply if each position was entered as a different site (survey).

FERC asked why April was not included in the survey schedule and the District explained that the area is not officially open until mid-to-late April. NGPC also noted that angling pressure generally does not ramp up until May.

The survey schedule developed by NGPC in association with Study 9.0 of the Proposed Study Plan would be applied to the combined study detailed in the Revised Study Plan; however, October is not included in this schedule. The October survey schedule would need to be determined.

NGPC noted that during poor weather conditions, it is appropriate to enter zeros and not perform surveys, as it is assumed that users would/could not access the area for recreation. NGPC stated that if access is feasible, even in limited areas, surveys should occur – if in doubt...survey. The data should not be biased for only good weather days.

Ultimately, it was decided that representatives from the District, HDR, and NGPC will get together for a face-to-face meeting to fine tune the details of the Recreation Use data collection activities. This meeting must occur prior to May 1, and based on participant schedules, is targeted for early March.

**Meeting Adjourned at 4:30 PM.**

**Action Items:**

Who	Task	Date Assigned
HDR	Contact TRAFx to verify the ability of the equipment to detect cyclists and consult with FERC and NPS.	1/14/10
FERC	Forward the required equipment list for TrailMaster counter to HDR.	1/14/10
HDR	Schedule face-to-face meeting between the District, HDR, and NGPC to fine-tune Recreation Use survey methods (FERC and NPS will also be invited and may choose to participate via conference call).	1/14/10
HDR	Forward survey forms to FERC and NPS for review.	1/14/10
HDR/LPD	Prepare more detailed study plan for methods proposed along the Loup River Bypass Reach and within the Loup Lands WMA and provide to present agencies for review.	1/14/10