



# Meeting Notes

Project: Loup River Hydroelectric Project FERC Project No. 1256	
Subject: Recreation / Land Use / Aesthetics Work Group	
Meeting Date: July 17, 2008, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Meeting Location: Conference Call
Notes by: HDR	

## Attendees:

- Mr. Randy Thoreson – National Park Service
- Mr. Dave Tunink – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
- Mr. Jeff Schuckman – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
- Mr. Ron Ziola – Loup Power District
- Mr. Neal Suess – Loup Power District
- Mr. Matt Pillard – HDR
- Mr. Quinn Damgaard – HDR
- [Mr. Bob Harms (USFWS) and Mr. Henry Santin (Nance Co.) were unable to attend]

## Topics Discussed:

1. Group organization
2. Project issues related to recreation, land use, and aesthetics
3. Initial identification and format of study requests
4. Next steps

## Action/Notes:

### Group Organization

- Work group currently contains a broad cross section of entities including National Park Service (NPS), Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Loup Power District (LPD), and HDR Engineering, Inc. (HDR)
- Letters have been mailed to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) including the Nebraska Off-Highway Vehicle Association (NOHVA), Columbus Area Recreational Trails (CART), and the Tern and Plover Partnership requesting their participation in the next agency meeting and/or their interest in joining the work group

### NPS Interest Items (Ref. Meeting notes from the June 25, 2008 Agency Meeting)

- Outdoor recreation, trails, fishing, boating/canoeing, and access
- Land Use – NPS requests a map of adjacent landowners along the Project Boundary. Their particular interest involves conflict points and access points
- Aesthetics – This can be a diverse item

### NGPC and USFWS Interest Items

- NGPC is specifically interested in fisheries and fishing opportunities
- NGPC reps did not receive June 25, 2008 notes and were directed to Loup.com for reference
- USFWS is currently working on the Technical Assistance Letter (TAL) for the Project. This will reference the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
- Bullet No. 7 of the June 25, 2008 USFWS and NGPC “Preliminary Concerns” document lists seven items related to recreation and asks if benefit components have been completed, maintained, and operated, or enhanced during the project period.

- Discussed whether or not there were initial recreational intentions at Project implementation and determined that the Project was originally constructed for power production and economic development with no specified intent related to recreational resources. Recreation components of the Project came later and at the District's expense or through public/private partnerships (especially during the 1963 construction of Lake North).

#### Identification of Potential Recreational Study Requests

- Assess existing recreational opportunities against current and projected demand
  - Recreational User Survey
    - Include frequency of use, what amenities are commonly used, what could be improved, current conditions, and plans for implementation
    - Loup currently performing weekly camper and tent counts for incorporation into 2008 Form 80 (to be submitted March 2009)
  - Evaluate hunting opportunities and needs
  - Coordinate with CART on trail development and connectivity of off-site trails with trails within the Project Boundary
  - Potentially improve Tailrace Park (vandalism is a problem which may require creative ideas to resolve)
  - Develop a plan to incorporate needed facilities identified during subsequent studies and determine project mitigation and enhancements (PMEs)
  - Creel Survey – what are anglers targeting, angler needs and expectations, catch rates, quality of fishery, determination of needed regulations or stocking
    - Should consist of angler interviews spanning one open-water fishing season
    - NGPC has existing creel survey cards that could be manipulated for use on the Project
    - Rupp performed creel survey on the canal in 1983-1984
    - Canal is included in Platte River survey
- NGPC would like to develop a "Fishery Plan" specific to Lake North. This plan should be approached as a study related to the relicensing process.
  - Could fish habitat/brush piles be installed
  - Could shoreline erosion be avoided by construction of jetties in the corner of the lake
  - Could angler access be improved
  - NGPC has other "Fishery Plan" models previously produced for other state and NRD lakes
  - Fishery improvements on Lake Babcock are limited due to the need for expansive dredging
  - LPD would be open to consider fishery improvements so long as Project operations are not impeded

#### Initial Identification and Format of Land Use Study Requests

- Assess potential for additional access
- Document removal of sand off-site for processing
- Concern with OHV use on private property, generally in the river channel (adjacent landowners own to the center of the channel).

#### Initial Identification and Format of Aesthetics Study Requests

- The group discussed aesthetics, but did not identify any specific study requests related to aesthetics
- It is not anticipated that a formal Project Aesthetic Resource Assessment or Visual Quality Assessment will be required
- At this time, it is assumed that any studies related to aesthetics would result following PAD submittal and review

#### Fisheries Studies Relative to Biology

- NGPC will likely suggest further studies related to the fisheries as part of the Biological Opinion
- NGPC would also like to perform fish counts (species, length, frequency) in the canal
  - Special access would be required to perform the counts. LPD could likely accommodate the effort
  - Non-motorized boating is not restricted on the canal, but it is also not advertised. It is inconvenient for boater use as frequent portages are required at bridges

- Flows will also be an issue that will require study
  - LPD is entitled 3,500 cfs; however, fish kill in the bypass reach may be an issue
  - LPD should notify and work with NGPC prior to performing draw downs to assure fish kill is not an issue

Next Steps

July 24, 2008 Meeting – Present meeting summary to act as a model for other Project work groups