

**MEETING SUMMARY\***  
**BISHOP CREEK HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT**  
**TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP UPDATES**  
**FERC PROJECT No. 1394**

**DATE:** Aquatics Update: June 11, 2019, 9 – 10 a.m.  
Recreation, Botanical, and Terrestrial Updates: June 19, 3 - 4pm  
**LOCATION:** Conference Calls

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*\*These meeting notes are documentation of general discussions from the meeting held on the above-noted date. These notes are not a verbatim account of proceedings, are not meeting minutes, and do not represent any final decisions or official documentation for the project or agency.*

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**1.0 ACTION ITEMS**

- Connect with USFS and the Water Board on whether the Board wants to test for full set of water quality indicators or just a subset (note; see additional discussion under Section 4.2 below).
- SCE to review stakeholder comments, determine nexus of requests, or seek clarity on extent and nature of concerns. As warranted, propose approach. Chase Hildeburn will review the Water Quality Implementation plan and provide feedback.

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**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

- Review the timeline for FERC process and study plan determination
- Identify any unresolved details/concerns within the aquatic study plans and ways to address them
- Review proposed implementation schedule

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**3.0 SUMMARY: JUNE 11 AQUATICS STUDY PLAN UPDATE**

**ATTENDEES:**

Sheila Irons, USFS  
Tristan Leong, USFS  
Todd Ellsworth, USFS  
Nick Buckmaster, CDFW  
Steve Parmenter, CDFW

Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt  
Michael Donovan, Kleinschmidt  
Tyler Kreider, Kleinschmidt  
Brandon Kulik, Kleinschmidt  
Shannon Luoma, Kleinschmidt  
Martin Ostendorf, SCE  
Terra Alpaugh, Kearns & West

### 3.1 FERC STATUS & SCHEDULE + MILESTONES FOR STUDY PLAN DETERMINATION

Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt, reported that SCE has filed the Notice of Intent (NOI), the Pre-Application Document (PAD) as well as the proposed study plans with FERC. Call Participants confirmed that they had been able to access all documents. FERC has not yet sent out their notice to initiate scoping but based on the communication with SCE, the team anticipates that they will host a site visit of the Bishop Creek facilities on July 30 and agency-focused and public meetings on July 31. Before that time, they will issue Scoping Document 1 which will share their initial assessment of the resources around the facility and areas of particular interest.

Finlay reminded TWG participants that under a normal ILP, stakeholders would review the PAD and make study plan requests by the end of August; SCE would then file plans in late September. In contrast, as part of the hybrid process, SCE and the TWG participants have already been working together for over a year to establish and refine study plans. Therefore, SCE hopes that each of the agencies is prepared to provide a letter of approval by the end of August, describing their participation in the pre-PAD engagement process and explaining that the issues have been appropriately identified and studies correctly scoped. In early September, SCE will then send a letter to FERC explaining that the study plans have stakeholder approval and requesting an expedited study plan determination. This will allow them to start studies later this year.

### 3.2 DISCUSS AQUATIC STUDY PLANS

The Relicensing Team walked through each aquatic study individually, outlining its scope, any updates, and any proposed near term study plan implementation activities. These items are provided in greater detail for the IFIM and Creek and Reservoir Fishery Studies, because a poor phone connection prevented participants from clearly hearing the updates on those items. For all the remaining studies, the summary below focuses on TWG participant feedback on any outstanding concerns that should be addressed prior to requesting agency support and FERC approval.

- **IFIM Study**
  - **Scope:** This study scope was developed and revised iteratively in close consultation with CDFW over the course of a year, including technical conferences with CDFW's modeling staff as well as Nick Buckmaster. The study area includes both forks of Bishop Creek as well as the bypass reaches of Plants 2-5. There are two field components: the first phase is the meso-habitat survey, which quantifies the distribution and composition of meso-habitats (pools, riffles, etc.) throughout the study area. These data then inform decisions about where to place representative study sites and transects where microhabitat modeling data are collected during the second phase. A technical memo will be produced by Kleinschmidt that will document the findings and provide initial recommendations for candidate study sites. SCE will work closely with CDFW and USFS to establish the advantages and disadvantages of sites and to decide on a representative selection for use in the study. During the second phase, bed profile substrate and hydraulic data are gathered at transects located within each study site, at calibration flows that are used by the Physical Habitat Simulation Model (PHABSIM) to simulate habitat suitability across the flow range of interest.
  - Regarding **schedule**, the team's goal is to collect all field data during 2019; the first phase was originally scheduled for June. However, due to the high snowfall and related runoff, the work must be delayed until late summer to await necessary lower flows. The second phase would follow that within a few weeks, presumably late September. This

will necessitate a need for the TWG to rapidly consult on proposed study sites. Kleinschmidt and CDFW have already discussed and agreed to conduct timely consultation between phases to support the schedule.

- **Stakeholder comments:** (1) USFS voiced interest in expanding the study to Birch and McGee Creeks, since SCE does divert from them. USFS wants to know what impacts the diversions may have on fisheries resources. CDFW supported their request. (2) USFS also noted that the Longley/McGee area is in designated wilderness; USFS should have a conversation with SCE about how to best address that fact and to review any limitations on the kinds of sampling that can be done in those areas.
- **Creek Fishery Study:**
  - **Scope: Objective #1:** Develop baseline data on the presence/absence, abundance and distribution of fish species inhabiting riverine habitat in the two branches and mainstem of Bishop Creek downstream though plant 5. Sampling will be conducted with backpack electrofishing and nets. **Objective #2:** Assess the abundance and growth of the self-sustaining brown trout population. This is to compare contemporary brown trout population metrics to those documented by Edison during the '80's and '90's. Edison will sample using identical methods and study sites on Bishop Creek to those used in the historic studies so that data sets are comparable. Kleinschmidt and CDFW (Nick Buckmaster) discussed whether the 2019 hydrologic conditions would potentially be a reason for postponing the study and concluded that the data could still be collected. CDFW caveated that, depending on the conditions at the time of the study, an additional year of data collection could be needed to evaluate the minimum flow regime proscribed by the license.
  - **Schedule:** Collect data in later summer or early fall.
  - **Stakeholder comments:** CDFW noted that this year's data will likely reflect high growth given the high flows, which while not average, will be a useful endpoint to have on record.
- **Reservoir Fishery study:**
  - **Scope:** Develop baseline data of the presence/absence and relative abundance of fish species inhabiting Sabrina Lake, South Lake and Longley Reservoir; collect descriptive population data on introduced populations of Owens Sucker. SCE will sample fish with boat electrofishing and gill nets in the lakes but be limited to gillnets at Longley due to access and wilderness restrictions.
  - **Schedule:** late spring and summer 2020.
- **Sediment modeling:** The team reviewed outstanding questions related to this study.
  - **Sampler size:** There was a question of whether to use a three inch or a six inch sampler for the sediment. The team believes that most materials are less than three inches, and a sampler of that size is also easier to deploy than the larger sampler. Therefore, they would like to tentatively proceed with the three inch sampler unless field work reveals that larger materials are present, in which case they will switch to the six inch sampler. *CDFW approved of that approach.*
  - **Sediment sources:** USFS had requested that the study examine sediment sources in Bishop Creek. SCE cannot find a nexus between sediment sources and project operations that justifies a quantitative approach. However, they can provide qualitative information including examining drone imagery (photos, not lidar) and using recreation surveys to identify eroding areas and comparing the historic cross-sections with current conditions. They believe this will provide a reliable guide to sediment sources in the area. *USFS confirmed that approach would satisfy their concerns.*
  - **Stakeholder comments:** (1) USFS requested that the study include a sediment budget, i.e. how much sediment is moving through the system, and how quickly is it

accumulating? As long as the study captures the bedload deposition, they can perform back-of-the-envelope calculations. SCE confirmed that the study will address those topic and provide information required to determine whether operations or maintenance need to be adjusted in response to sediment. (2) CDFW suggested that bathymetric LIDAR looking at changes in elevation in the creek might be a cost-competitive alternative to field work, particularly if SCE does need to utilize the six-inch sampler. If they pursued that path, the Team could reconsider including bathymetric work in the reservoirs as well. SCE explained that they feel the proposed methodology meets USFS information needs and resource interests; however, if surveys show that the six inch sampler is needed, they might reconsider using LIDAR.<sup>1</sup>

- **Water Quality Study:** The Team described the study areas and water quality metrics they will be testing for and noted that the Water Board has not proposed any additional changes to the plan. They asked if TWG participants had any concerns about the plan as proposed.
  - **Stakeholder:** (1) USFS reminded the Team that they will need to confirm the appropriate tools for sampling in Longley Lake given its wilderness designation. CDFW suggested that a van dorn sampler is very non-invasive and easy to deploy. (2) USFS expressed concern about the absence of testing for metrics associated with human use (e.g. coliform and fecal coliform) given the high recreational use in summer months. These would be important metrics in case recreation impacts need to be mitigated. The Team noted that the Regional Board study did not find any bacterial issues above Plant 6, but they will discuss a potential methods to address this concern. USFS requested a sideboard with the Water Board on whether they want to test for full set of water quality indicators or just a subset. (3) USFS also noted that many recent studies have revealed high methylmercury in Sierra systems. CDFW agreed that there is reason to be concerned about methylmercury given that it is deposited aerially and bioaccumulates in long living fish. To test, they would need to take 1 cm samples of fish tissue. The team agreed to review USGS reports and other relevant literature about areas at risk for mercury.

#### 4.0 SUMMARY: JUNE 19 TERRESTRIAL, BOTANICAL, RECREATION STUDY PLAN UPDATES

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##### ATTENDEES:

Sheila Irons, USFS  
Chase Hildeburn, Water Board  
Trisha Moyer, CDFW  
Rose Banks, CDFW

Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt  
Brad Blood, Psomas  
Edith Read, E. Read Consulting  
Michael Donovan, Kleinschmidt  
Matt Harper, Kleinschmidt  
Shannon Luoma, Kleinschmidt  
Kelly Larimer, Kleinschmidt  
Matt Woodhall, SCE  
Terra Alpaugh, Kearns & West

#### 4.1 FERC STATUS & SCHEDULE + MILESTONES FOR STUDY PLAN DETERMINATION

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<sup>1</sup> CDFW Comment (7/9/19): The study should meet both USFS, CDFW, and other stakeholder needs.

Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt, reported that SCE has filed the Notice of Intent (NOI), the Pre-Application Document (PAD) as well as the proposed study plans with FERC. FERC has not yet sent out their notice to initiate scoping but based on the communication with SCE, the team anticipates that they will host a site visit of the Bishop Creek facilities on July 30 and agency-focused and public meetings on July 31. Before that time, they will issue Scoping Document 1 which will share their initial assessment of the resources around the facility and areas of particular interest. The Relicensing Team (hereafter, “the Team”) will distribute links to that document as soon as it is posted.

Finlay reminded TWG participants that under a normal ILP, stakeholders would review the PAD and make study plan requests by the end of August; SCE would then file plans in late September. In contrast, as part of the hybrid process, SCE and the TWG participants have already been working together for over a year to establish and refine study plans. Therefore, SCE hopes that each of the agencies is prepared to provide a letter of approval by the end of August, describing their participation in the pre-PAD engagement process and explaining that the issues have been appropriately identified and studies correctly scoped. In early September, SCE will then send a letter to FERC explaining that the study plans have stakeholder approval and requesting an expedited study plan determination. This will allow them to start studies later this year.

#### 4.2 DISCUSS STUDY PLANS

The Relicensing Team walked through each plan individually, providing a high level update on its scope, any updates, and any proposed near term study plan implementation activities. They requested that TWG participants raise any outstanding concerns that should be addressed prior to requesting agency support and FERC approval. The summary below focuses on TWG participant feedback on that topic.

- **Water Quality Study Plan:** The team reviewed this plan again since the Water Board was unable to attend the prior call. The team would like the Board’s feedback on their implementation plan, which outlines their proposed methods and approach to analysis. The Board stated that if the implementation plan is consistent with what they previously reviewed (Water Quality Study Plan distributed November 15 2019), they did not anticipate issues, but agreed to review and cross check against other comparable implementation plans. They will reach out to Michael Donovan directly with any feedback.
- **Terrestrial Study Plan:**
  - **Schedule:** The team reported that they are beginning to implement the wildlife study plan. (1) For bats, they are completing a habitat assessment of facilities and based on what they find, they will design a targeted acoustic bat survey to be completed in 2020. They received Kerry Schmidt’s request for a winter bat assessment and will reach out to her to schedule. (2) They will begin the first part of the general wildlife survey August 5<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>. Based on that survey, they will identify issues that require more directed surveys in 2020. (3) They are postponing the goshawk survey until 2020.
  - **Stakeholder feedback:** Neither USFS or CDFW had comments. The Team will finalize and circulate the study plan for final approval shortly.
- **Botanical Study Plans:**
  - **Schedule:** (1) Rare and invasive plant surveys were initiated last week in conjunction with the regular riparian monitoring underway. They saw some rare plants but none high on the list of concern. The only invasive plant of significant concern identified is the black locust. There will be another round of surveys on July 30<sup>th</sup> in backcountry areas. (2) For the riparian survey, they plan to use the guild approach for organizing the species, but Edith Read needs to follow up with Blake Engelhardt to discuss which

species should go into which guilds. The team plans to wait until the riparian monitoring is complete before proceeding with the guild analysis, since the species list may change.

- **Stakeholder feedback:** Neither USFS or CDFW had comments
- **Recreation Study Plans:** Further refinement of this plan has been on hold pending additional USFS input on their expectations regarding analysis and level-of-detail. They anticipate getting that feedback in mid-July from USFS. The team will provide USFS will sample surveys from other relicensing, so that they can provide initial feedback on questions.
  - **Stakeholder feedback:** USFS asked the team to focus on what is driving behavior (e.g. why are they coming and choosing to recreate in certain spots?). They are interested in open-ended questions.

In general, TWG participants did not see any significant issues with the terrestrial, botanical, or recreation studies as presented and do not anticipate major obstacles with providing concurrent letters on this timeline.

DRAFT