



# Swan Lake Hydroelectric Project (FERC No 2911) Reservoir Expansion Final Meeting Summary February 27, 2013

## ATTENDANCE:

Monte Miller	Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADFG)
Kelly Piazza	ADFG
Shawn Johnson	ADFG
Ted Deats (telephonic)	Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Clint Grundlefinger (telephonic)	DNR
Finlay Anderson	McMillen, LLC (McMillen)
Cory Warnock	McMillen
Eric Wolfe	Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA)
Sharon Thompson	SEAPA
John Knutzen	Tetra Tech
Steve Negri	Tetra Tech
Steve Brockmann (telephonic)	US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
Darin Silkworth	US Forest Service (USFS)
Rick Turner (telephonic)	USFS
Barbara Stanley	USFS
Jeannie Blackmore	USFS
Jill Reeck	USFS
Will Young	USFS

*(Telephonic participants also participated via GoToMeeting.com on the web.)*

## Background and Meeting Objectives

The Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) owns the Swan Lake Hydroelectric Project (Project; FERC Project No. 2911), on the Northeast side of Carroll Inlet in Southeast Alaska. SEAPA is currently evaluating the engineering feasibility and value of increasing the reservoir's storage capacity through an increase in dam height. SEAPA proposes to raise the dam height by up to 15 feet. Powerhouse operations would not change and the nameplate capacity will remain at 22 MW. Under the proposed operations, the reservoir could fluctuate annually from 271.5 feet to 345 feet, depending on precipitation, load, and operations at other facilities associated with the Southeast Alaska Intertie (STI). In order to increase the size of the reservoir, a non-capacity amendment application will need to be filed with and approved by FERC.

An informal meeting with the agencies was previously held on May 24, 2012 to describe the proposed reservoir expansion project and explain its need, confirm agency responsibilities and information needs

relative to land management, water rights, and fish and wildlife resource. A path forward with respect to information development and the FERC process was also discussed. Based on the May 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, seven natural resource study plans were developed and provided to the agencies for review and comment. Those studies were carried out during the summer/fall of 2012. The results of those studies were a primary discussion topic during this meeting. Both the May 24 meeting and this meeting were informal gatherings of the agencies thought to have the most immediate interest in the project and/or knowledge of any potential issues and concerns.

The formal amendment process involving consultation with affected agencies, Tribal Governments, may commence in the winter of 2013 with the goal of filing in January 2014. In an effort to facilitate and expedite the process, SEAPA began the aforementioned reconnaissance level environmental surveys in the summer of 2012. These study results can be found at <http://www.longviewassociates.com/swanlake.html>.

The objectives of this meeting were to:

1. Review the purpose, need, and proposed action for the project
2. Discuss parallel processes, i.e. timber, leases, etc.
3. Review 2012 study objectives and results, which include:
  - comments on study reports
  - land ownership
  - cultural resources
  - terrestrial resources
  - fish and aquatic
4. Review plan of action for 2013 and discuss agency questions, the FERC process, and schedule

### Summary

SEAPA staff, its consultants, McMillen, LLC (formerly Long View Associates) and Tetra Tech summarized the studies that were conducted in 2012 and presented key findings (See Attachment 1, PowerPoint Presentation)

Key discussions and observations from the meeting:

### Discussion included:

- Purpose of meeting and path forward
- SEAPA under pressure to meet increasing loads
- Key findings presented from 2012 studies conducted
- Initial Consultation Document (ICD) processes/stages
- Impact of raising dam 15 ft.
- Endangered/invasive plant species
- Logging/timber cruise/disposal of unmerchantable logs
- Dolly Varden/Kokanee populations
- NEPA Process

- Surveying error by Bureau of Land Management
- Potential Impacts to Wildlife Species

Action Items and Agreements:

- SEAPA to send the SEAPA Real Time link to meeting attendants (see website at [www.longviewassociates.com/swanlake.html](http://www.longviewassociates.com/swanlake.html) , which has active links or click on the links below)
  1. [SEAPA](#)
  2. [Ketchikan Public Utilities](#)
- SEAPA to use comments at meeting and submitted comments from the USFS (see Attachment 2) to lay out the information development path prior to filing a license amendment application with FERC. The path forward will be summarized in the forthcoming Initial Consultation Document (ICD) and a Response to Comments (RTC) matrix.
  1. It was agreed that SEAPA would finalize the study reports, correcting information as indicated but would not “reanalyze” findings to address USFS comments; instead the expanded analysis/area will be addressed in a series of Resource Reports (see item 3 below) to be developed in advance of NEPA documents and the final license amendment.
  2. Agencies and SEAPA discussed outstanding questions regarding the Swan Lake existing environment and potential risks to those resources from the proposed action given information developed in 2012. Except as noted below, agencies agreed that additional field data collection and surveys were not appropriate given the relatively small risk of impacts and the high level of effort that would be required to provide answers with any precision. Specifically agencies discussed the following resource areas:
    - Water Resources
      - DNR has reviewed current and past water use data and indicated that it, along with continuing reporting, appears to provide sufficient hydrologic data for Swan Lake to quantify availability of the volume of water requested (11 AAC 93.040 (c) (14)).
    - Fish and Aquatics
      - No additional fieldwork is necessary to address agency questions. As requested in the TNF comments, additional work will be done to expand the area of analysis in the Resource Reports. The resource reports will also address other questions raised in the TNF comments.
    - Botanical Resources
      - No additional fieldwork is necessary to address agency concerns. As requested in the TNF comments, additional work will be done to expand the area of analysis in the Resource Reports. The resource reports will also address other questions raised in the TNF comments (see below)
    - Wildlife Resources:
      - Agencies agreed that the planned Goshawk and raptor surveys (in June) will address outstanding information needs. As crews are gathering this information, any additional wildlife observations will be documented.

- Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species
    - No additional fieldwork is necessary to address this resource area. As requested in the TNF comments, additional work will be done to expand the area of analysis in the Resource Reports. The resource reports will also address other questions raised in the TNF comments
  - Socioeconomics
    - No additional fieldwork was discussed. As requested in the TNF comments, additional work will be done to expand the area of analysis in the Resource Reports. The resource reports will also address other questions raised in the TNF comments. The TNF will review their special use permitting database to see if there are any hunting/fishing guides that use the area.
  - Cultural Resources
    - TNF believes the Cultural Resources Reports addresses all of their questions; they will provide information on how and when this report is typically forwarded to SHPO [update: SEAPA will forward Cultural Resources Report to the State Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO) after being designated as FERC’s non-federal representative for Section 106 consultation]
  - Aesthetic Resources
    - Agencies agreed that additional fieldwork will be needed and that because trees are not going to be harvested on TNF lands there will be no impacts in this area
  - Tribal Resources
    - Agencies recommended that Initial consultation should include three tribal governments: Ketchikan Indian Corporation (KIC); Organized Village of Saxman (OVS); and, Metlakatla Indian Community (MIC)
3. Resource Reports will:
- have more clarity on “analysis area”, showing staging areas, additional mapping (intent is to be more descriptive in project descriptions and mapping to the extent possible); and clearer delineation between NFS and non-NFS lands;
  - confirm areas of mass wasting on map and reconcile with GIS layer;
  - describe and analyze approach to logging DNR lands around the reservoir. It was agreed that SEAPA will continue working on DNR, Division of Forestry, Ketchikan office, on a logging plan and will communicate with agencies on decisions made;
  - clearly define the area that will be the actual construction area on a map;
  - expand on land use designation shown on a map (as required by NEPA) document (e.g., utilize the Tongass LUD layer, VCU, and 6<sup>th</sup> Level Watershed layer per resource needs);
  - review additional historical documents on kokanee
  - conduct GIS analysis of current aquatic habitat characteristics in Lost Creek, Lost Lake and tributaries to Lost Lake

- address other comments as described proposed in Response To Comments Matrix (forthcoming)
  - it was agreed that agencies would have a chance to review and comment draft Resource Reports prior to issuance of a draft amendment application and/or Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) with BA/BE
4. Other documents to be developed in support of the NEPA process will include:
- a PDEA with BA/BE
  - a separate Botanical Resources Report that includes the invasive risk assessment and a Biological Evaluation that the agencies will need. The Botanical Resources BE will treat newly identified plant species as “rare” for purposes of NEPA analysis.
  - Documentation of any consultation with the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), including any determinations for required permits
  - 401 Certification Waiver (Clean Water Act) from DEC
  - USFS agreed to provide language for Subsistence, and Roadless sections of the PDEA
- SEAPA will organize site visit to Swan Lake Dam/Lost Creek (*update: this was discussed as May 22 or 23 at the meeting, however SEAPA has since emailed agencies regarding potential availability on May 8<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Additional information and planning will be forthcoming).*
  - SEAPA will distribute schedule explaining process after filing of amendment (note: this schedule will also be part of ICD, however to the extent SEAPA receives comments prior to sending the ICD to printers, comments will be incorporated and the schedule will be revised as appropriate).
  - SEAPA will check out virus in reports posted on [www.seapa.org](http://www.seapa.org) webpage
  - McMillen will notify agencies when final reports are available and post them to the Project website.

Distributed /Attached Material

- Agenda for 02-27-2013 Swan Pool Raise Agency Meeting
- PowerPoint Presentation (PDF)
- Draft Study Reports (available at [www.longviewassociates.com/swanlake.html](http://www.longviewassociates.com/swanlake.html))