

## FINAL MINUTES

APRIL 27, 2011, WILDLIFE STUDY PLANNING MEETING

TAKATZ LAKE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT, FERC No. 13234-001

*Prepared by:*

**City and Borough of Sitka Electric Department (“City”)**

The City held a meeting with various agency representatives in Sitka, Alaska on April 27, 2011. The meeting was to discuss the Draft Wildlife Report from 2010 and also the wildlife studies planned for 2011 for the Takatz Lake Hydro Project (“Takatz Project”, FERC No. 13234). The meeting was held in the Electric Department conference room and began at about 3:15 PM.

In attendance were:

Chris Leeseberg, USFS Sitka District Ranger  
Shawn Johnson, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Kevin White, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Monte Miller, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Susan Walker, National Marine Fisheries Service  
Jeff Feldpausch, Sitka Tribe of Alaska  
Jessica Stockel, City Electric Department Administrative Assistant  
Dean Orbison, City Engineer  
Mike Prewitt, City FERC licensing consultant  
Kent Bovee, Wildlife Biologist

After introductions, Mike said that the purposes of the meeting were to summarize 2010 field studies, discuss 2011 field studies and give an update on the FERC licensing status relative to the studies. Mike reminded everyone that the draft Wildlife Report was distributed in March 2010 and asked that comments be filed with FERC and copied to the City, preferably within 60 days of when the report was sent.

Mike went over a general overview of the 2010 wildlife studies explaining that they had been conducted in the Takatz, Baranof, Sadie and Medvejie basins with an emphasis on the Takatz and Baranof basins. Mike showed a project area map and described two alternative transmission line corridors, the Marine Transmission Line (MTL) and the Overland Transmission Line (OTL), with the City preferring the OTL. He said that because the OTL is preferred, no marine studies were conducted in 2010. Mike added that he didn't know whether FERC would require modification to the Scoping Document to reflect any final decisions on the transmission route.

Monte asked about a proposed road around a portion of Takatz Bay and Dean said a small road would only be built and used for construction. Mike added that with the possibility of a lake tap could mean that there wouldn't be a road built. He explained that the City had looked at the potential for doing the project as a "staged development" initially using a lake tap and only building the dam if the electrical load increases justified it. The "Lake Tap Alternative" (LTA) would generate less electricity, but would have lower costs because of not needing to build the dam. He said that under the LTA there would be no raise in water levels, eliminating inundation of the areas around Takatz Lake including the valley of Upper Takatz Creek. He said that the City would make a decision soon as to whether the Lake Tap Alternative would be preferred by the City.

Dean said that the LTA would be dependent on bathymetric surveys, to be done in 2011. He said that these studies would show whether or not the bottom topography of Takatz Lake, including presence of boulders in the area of the tap, was suitable. He said these studies would have to be done prior to any decision on whether to adopt the LTA as the City's preferred alternative.

Kent then showed pictures of each of the basins studied in 2010. He explained his study methods in 2010, stating that he did a literature review, general observation surveys and species-specific surveys. He described the goat tagging surveys done in conjunction with ADF&G. Mike added that the Blue Lake Expansion is also a project that the City is working on that involves goat studies because of potential cumulative effects.

Kent said that, in 2010, he documented 48 species of wildlife, mapped occurrence of key species and noted that no Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species were observed. Kent said that there was relatively low wildlife use in the Takatz Lake inundation zone and that no goats were observed in this area.

He said that perhaps the most notable wildlife in the Project area were 1) the very active beaver areas in the Takatz and Baranof Basins; and 2) the concentration of goats in the area where Upper Baranof River enters Baranof Lake. He noted that this is the area where the transmission line is currently routed, whether it goes underwater or overland north of Baranof Lake.

Mike said that impacts to these goats could possibly be addressed by routing the transmission line around sensitive areas.

Kent showed maps of occurrences in the project area of goats, brown bear, furbearers, (including marten, mink, river otter and beaver) small mammals, raptors, waterfowl and shorebirds. Monte commented on the small mammals map inquiring if Kent had seen any wood rats to which Kent replied no.

Kent showed a list of forest and songbirds seen and said that the list will grow and that he hasn't had a chance to focus on it yet. He also discussed amphibians of which he only noted one, the Western Toad.

He showed a graphic of T&E species, species of concern and sensitive species. Sue said that the whales and sea lions on the list were of no concern to her if the marine alternative was not being considered. She added that she could provide a letter from NMFS stating that.

There was some discussion of the transmission line. Dean said that the original design showed the line running underwater in Baranof Lake, but that it was now routed through the forest on the north side of the lake. He said that it would look like the line which now leads from the Green Lake project above Silver Bay.

Kent then showed a timeline of the proposed 2011 studies. The general study timeframe would be April through October with specific times for goat kidding surveys, bear den surveys, raptor nests surveys, Goshawk broadcast survey, owl broadcast survey, Marbled Murrelet surveys, small animal trapping and beaver cache surveys.

Mike said that, in 2011, wildlife studies would be conducted along the transmission route which might greatly increase the geographic scope. He said it would be helpful for agencies to comment on how detailed the studies should be along the transmission route.

There was some discussion of whether studies needed to be continued for a period of years. It was stated that agencies had already asked for multiple year studies of goshawks.

Mike described Project progress as it related to the FERC licensing schedule. He said that the Preliminary Permit expires in Sept. 2011 and that the scope of studies is simply too large to complete in one year. He said that that would result in the City submitting an application for a second preliminary permit at the time the first permit expires.

Mike then asked for comments from attendees.

Sue asked if there was any direct comment on Kittlitz's Murrelet surveys for ADF&G. Kent said there hasn't been.

Chris asked if Kent has the Forest Service GIS layers for vegetation and habitat. Kent said he hadn't seen those yet. Chris offered to send them over.

Chris asked why the transmission line around Baranof Lake would be on land instead of under water. Dean said that it was outlined in an engineering report from Commonwealth.

Monte then asked what the width of the transmission corridor would be. Dean said it would probably be the same as the transmission line that runs to Green Lake which was 200 ft (100 ft on either side of the line), but that a final decision on the clearing had not been made.

Monte added that the cabin on Baranof Lake would have visual impacts by the transmission line clearing.

Chris asked if goats were coming all the way down to Baranof Lake. Kevin said that they have in the past but generally they stay about 500 ft from the lake. Chris expressed concern about the transmission line and goat migration and overwintering.

Monte asked why the City decided to tie in at Green Lake and not at Blue Lake. Mike suggested a wildlife work group which would confer with the City and the transmission contractor.

Mike asked attendees to send a list of bulleted items of studies they wanted to see conducted in 2011. He emphasized that this would be helpful to get the draft study plan out and the final study plan approved quicker.

The meeting adjourned at about 4:35 PM.