

CULTURAL RESOURCES STUDY PLAN

Blue Lake Hydroelectric Project, FERC No. 2230 Relicensing

Prepared by:

City and Borough of Sitka Electric Department

105 Jarvis St., Sitka AK, 99835

September, 2004

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This Draft Cultural Resources Study Plan describes proposed studies related to relicensing of the Blue Lake hydroelectric project (“Project”, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) No. 2230)), owned by the City and Borough of Sitka, FERC licensee, and operated by the City and Borough of Sitka Electric Department (collectively, the “City”). The Plan is written to comply with the many federal laws enacted to ensure the protection of cultural resources including but not limited to the National Historic Preservation Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

The City is in the process of obtaining a new license for the Project. In the relicensing process, the City must make available to the FERC information on existing natural resources potentially affected by the relicensing action. The FERC will use that information to characterize the environmental baseline in various impact evaluation and other decision documents.

As required under FERC regulations, the City has submitted a Notice of Intent (NOI) to relicense the project, distributed an Initial Consultation Document (ICD), held agency and public meetings and a site visit, all in November and December, 2002. In the ICD, the City generally proposed a two-phase cultural resource study plan to first document existing cultural and historical resources in the Project area, and then, if necessary, to survey and catalogue the higher-value resources, if encountered.

In comments on the ICD dated February 14, 2003, the US Forest Service stated that

“heritage resources must be inventoried and protected as specified by law. The principal goal of the evaluation will be the identification of historical and archeological resources in the APE that could be affected by continued operation of the Project or by development of new Project facilities. ‘Identification’ includes identifying properties and determining whether or not they are listed on, or eligible for inclusion in, the NRHP”.

In September, 2003, the City distributed Scoping Document 1 as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the relicensing. In comments on SD1 dated December 23, 2003, USFS stated:

“While there are no known cultural resource issues at this time, to our knowledge, the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) has not yet completed an inventory of cultural resources in the project area. We concur with the methods proposed by the CBS in the Initial Consultation Document (pages 33 and 34) and encourage the CBS to complete a thorough cultural resource inventory to document the presence or absence of cultural resources affected or potentially affected by project activities.”

In response to those comments, the City committed, in Scoping Document 2 (SD2), to prepare a draft cultural resources study plan. In comments dated May 7, 2004, USFS stated:

“You state, ‘Based on earlier surveys’, if such surveys exist we would like to see this information incorporated into the Cultural Resources Study Plan. We look forward to your submittal of a draft Cultural Resources Study Plan (page 56.)”

The Plan reflects written comments from USFS dated February 12, 2004, and May 15, 2004. This plan will be distributed for review by all consulting resource agencies (identified on the Project relicensing mailing list at the time of the Plan’s completion) and finalized prior to any field work, which is expected to begin in summer, 2004.

PROPOSED CULTURAL RESOURCES STUDIES

In general, the City proposes to survey potentially-affected cultural and historical resources in the Project area to provide a current baseline for environmental analyses necessary to complete Project relicensing. Because the City is not proposing any operational or structural changes to the project, (particularly with respect to raising the dam and subsequent elevation of the reservoir) no additional inundation, construction or other disturbances are expected.

Blue Lake Project cultural resource studies will be comprised of two primary efforts, relative to the Project area (defined below): 1) Literature and Information Review and 2) Field Studies, as described in detail below.

The City is prepared to hire a qualified cultural resources contractor to conduct both the literature review and field studies phases above. The contractor’s resume will be made available to consulting agencies for review and approval prior to contracting.

LITERATURE AND INFORMATION REVIEW

Literature Review

The City, through its cultural resources contractor, will research available cultural and historical resources literature, including, but not limited to:

- Site/survey atlas records
- Mining history
- A report by Rabich-Campbell, 1989

Much relevant available literature is expected to be available at the Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) and at the USFS Sitka Ranger District Office in Sitka AK. The cultural resources contractor will also search other sources, including academic and other resource agency libraries and files, as appropriate.

Informational Review: Interviews with STA Elders and Citizens

The cultural resources contractor will work with appropriate STA staff to interview STA elders and citizens to discuss the existence of cultural sites, customary and traditional gathering sites or other tribally-significant items located in the Area of Potential Effect (APE, see “Study Area” Section, below) for this project. STA staff will conduct these interviews and provide the cultural resources contractor with the pertinent information for this project. All interviews will be recorded and stored at the STA office.

Confidentiality of information released to the cultural resources contractor will be guaranteed as required under federal law and policy. While surveys conducted to date have not revealed any sites or artifacts, these interviews will provide a good opportunity to compile baseline data for use in the relicensing information.

Decision-Making Based on Literature and Information Review

A brief report of results of the literature and information review will be compiled by the cultural resources contractor and the City and distributed for resource agency and STA review. Comments on literature findings and informational review will be considered when planning field studies described below.

STUDY AREA

The City will first define the APE as outlined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The APE will be based on the existing Project features including access roads, transmission lines and inundated areas. The “baseline” for the relicensing impact evaluations is the current environment, and the City envisions no or minimal changes in the Project design on relicensing. It will be the objective of these surveys, however, to describe existing cultural and historic resources in all Project areas, regardless of the potential for change.

FIELD STUDIES

Within the overall study areas encompassing Blue Lake, Sawmill Creek and various access roads and transmission lines, field studies will be conducted at different levels of intensity, depending on elevation and specific location, as described in the following:

- It is anticipated that the primary area of concern will be below the dam. Although this area has been altered by modern activities there is the possibility of Russian use, and post-1867 use;
- In the Sawmill Creek area below the dam, it is more likely that Alaska Native resources would found at elevations below 100 feet MSI, and survey intensity will be greater below this division;
- Due to the project elevation, proposed relicensing actions (no change in water level), and steep slopes, shoreline survey of Blue Lake will not be conducted;
- The City and cultural resources contractor will document the historic mining activities at the upstream end of Blue Lake, near the source stream known in relicensing terminology as “Blue Lake Creek”, which emanates from Glacier Lake.. A corduroy road has been reported in that area, but not documented. To the extent possible given safety and accessibility concerns, the mining activities and road will be recorded and determinations of eligibility made.

REPORTING

The City and its cultural resources contractor will prepare a draft report documenting the literature review, information review and field survey components of the study. The report will be organized in traditional technical report format, including:

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

LITERATURE AND INFORMATION REVIEW

Ethnographic Context

Historic Use

Previous Investigations

FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

Methods

Results

RECOMMENDATIONS

Comparison with Similar Southeast Alaska Surveys

Determination of Eligibility and Effect

APPENDICES

Specific Site Location Data

STUDY AND REPORT SCHEDULE

The cultural resources studies should commence in fall, 2004 and the report should be available as a draft by winter, 2004 or early 2005. If further surveys are required, the

field effort may lapse into 2005, recognizing that weather and access may preclude further surveys until summer of that year.

All Draft Cultural Resources Reports will be submitted for review by USFS, SHPO and STA.

CONSULTATION

The draft cultural resources plan was distributed for review by USFS, SHPO and STA. Comments were received from all three parties, either verbally or in writing. STA comments were hand delivered (Attachment I) and suggested several wording changes, some of them substantive. We have modified the draft to include all requested STA changes except the first comment, requesting that, in the Introduction and Background section, last paragraph we state that the plan state that “the draft plan is written **in response to** USFS comments, not that the draft plan reflects written comments.”

We believe that the plan reflects USFS’s comments, but is written in response to other comments dating back to initial consultation. The original language has been retained.

Comments from the SHPO, not received in writing at the time of this submittal, indicated approval of the proposed methods and schedule.

USFS comments (Attachment II) were incorporated before completion of the draft study plan.

ATTACHMENT I

Comments from STA and USFS on Draft Cultural Resources Study Plan

August 27, 2004

VIA HAND DELIVERY AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Charles Walls
Electric Utility Director
City and Borough of Sitka
105 Jarvis Street
Sitka, AK 99835
charlie@cityofsitka.com

Re: Draft Cultural Resources Study Plan Blue Lake Hydroelectric Project

Dear Mr. Walls,

I write on behalf of Sitka Tribe of Alaska to provide comment on the Draft Cultural Resources Plan drafted by the City and Borough Electric Department for the relicensing of the Blue Lake Hydroelectric Department. Sitka Tribe is responsible to preserve the cultural integrity of the Sitka Tribe's traditional territory for our 3,100 tribally enrolled citizens. It is on their behalf that I submit the following comments. The most important comment that follows is that Sitka Tribe believes it is appropriate for interviews with Tribal elders and citizens to be conducted by the Sitka Tribe because these people will be more forthright with STA employees and STA can ensure that confidential information be kept confidential. Thus, Sitka Tribe respectfully requests that the City and Borough require the cultural resources contractor to subcontract this portion of work to the Sitka Tribe.

Introduction and Background

STA suggests the following revisions to this section:

- The last paragraph of should state that the draft plan is written **in response to** USFS comments, not that the draft plan reflects written comments.
- A definition of "all consulting resource agencies" should be made. This definition I think should include USFS, ADF&G, STA and whomever else is involved in this project.
- A sentence should be added stating that "This plan is written to comply with the many federal laws enacted to ensure the protection of cultural resources including but not limited to the National Historic Preservation Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act."

Literature and Information Review

STA suggests the following revisions to this section:

- Under literature review, add that relevant available literature may also be available at Sitka Tribe of Alaska offices.

- Retitling “Interviews with Sitka Tribe of Alaska representatives” to “Informational Review: Interviews with STA elders and citizens.” This will provide consistency with the title of this section.
- Rewording “Interviews” section to allow for STA to conduct the interviews with Tribal elders and citizens. If this is allowed, then this subsection could be revised to read

The cultural resources contractor will work with appropriate STA staff to interview STA elders and citizens to discuss the existence of cultural sites, customary and traditional gathering sites or other tribally-significant items located in the area of potential effect (APE) for this project. STA staff will conduct these interviews and provide the cultural resources contractor with the pertinent information for this project. All interviews will be recorded and stored at the STA office. Confidentiality of information released to the cultural resources contractor will be guaranteed as required under federal law and policy. While surveys conducted to date have not revealed any sites or artifacts, these interviews will provide a good opportunity to compile baseline data for use in the relicense information.
- Under Decision Making Based on Literature and Information Review, add “and information review” after literature findings in second sentence.

Study Area

The language in this section should refer to the “Area of Potential Effect” as outlined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Field Studies

Under the second bullet, Sitka Tribe recommends that the words Native American be replaced with Alaska Native.

Reporting

Sitka Tribe recommends that

- The word “both” be removed, and after literature review “information review” should be inserted.
- Under the proposed report format, after Literature Review insert “Information Review”

Study and Report Schedule

Sitka Tribe recommends that this section be updated to reflect a more accurate schedule.

Thank you for allowing Sitka Tribe to comment on this Draft Cultural Resources Plan. Please contact Jessica Perkins, Resources Protection Director at 747-7500 if you have any questions or for follow-up to these comments.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Widmark

Cc: Mike Prewitt, Pat Bauer

ATTACHMENT II

Comments from USFS on Draft Cultural Resources Study Plan

BLUE LAKE HYDRO RELICENSE CULTURAL RESOURCE PLAN

P. Bower 5/15/04

Literature Review

We can summarize the available sources by just saying that the “results of previous investigations are available at the USFS Sitka Ranger District Office” this is more general and doesn’t confine the contractor. I didn’t realize that was what I’d done until reviewing the draft.

Decision-Making Based on Lit and Info Review

This implies the contractor would need to come back to do the field work – can we skip this step and combine the lit review with the field investigation? Field work shouldn’t be too extensive and combining them might save the City some money.

Field Studies

Is MSI feet or meters? The high sensitivity zone is up to 100 feet

Reporting

This can be simplified – all we need is:

- Introduction
- Lit search
 - ethnographic context
 - historic use
 - previous investigations
- Field Investigations
 - Methods
 - Results
- Recommendations
 - If cultural sites are found this would include Determinations of Eligibility and Effect
- References
- Appendices (specific site location data needs to be in a removable appendix).
This is a requirement of our Programmatic Agreement with the SHPO.

The FS needs to review the report and it needs to be in submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office for review.