

DRAFT CULTURAL RESOURCES STUDY PLAN

Blue Lake Hydroelectric Project, FERC No. 2230 Relicensing

Prepared by:

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105 Jarvis St., Sitka AK, 99835

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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 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.)”

This Draft 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, 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

Most of the relevant available literature resides at the USFS Sitka Ranger District Office in Sitka AK. The cultural resources contractor will also search other sources, including academic and resource agency libraries and files, as appropriate.

Interviews with Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) representatives.

The cultural resources contractor and selected City representatives may interview STA members to determine the existence of any tribally-significant sites or artifacts within the Project area. Confidentiality of the information will be given the utmost consideration. While other surveys have not noted such sites or artifacts, the interviews will also provide a good opportunity to compile baseline information for use in the relicensing application. The interview(s) will be documented in the manner desired by STA.

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 will be considered when planning field studies described below.

STUDY AREA

The City will first define the area to be surveyed 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 Native American 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 both the literature review and field surveys components of the study. The report will be organized in traditional technical report format, including:

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

LITERATURE 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 mid-summer, 2004 and the report should be available as a draft by early fall, 2004. If further surveys are required, the 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.