

FINAL – Terrestrial Resources Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2016
Noxon Emergency Services Building
10:00 a.m. (MST)

Attendees

Designated TRTAC Representatives

Avista Corp. – Nate Hall
Bull River Watershed Council – Kathy Ferguson
Cabinet Resource Group – Cal Ryder
Elk Creek Watershed Council – Judy Hutchins
Green Mountain Conservation District – Howard Bakke
Idaho Department of Fish and Game – Kathy Cousins
Montana Department of Environmental Quality – Craig Jones
Sanders County Commissioner – Tony Cox
U.S. Forest Service – Les Raynor

Other Attendees

Avista Corp. – Joe DosSantos, Lisa Vollertsen, Sean Moran, Shana Bernall, Eric Oldenburg, and René Wiley; Noxon-Cabinet Shoreline Coalition – Richard Reich and Alan Stohle; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Dave Bennetts

Introduction

Nate Hall welcomed those in attendance and invited participants to introduce themselves. The purpose of today's meeting is to review the draft 2016 Annual Implementation Plans (AIPs), make any necessary corrections, and approve moving them forward for the Management Committee's (MC) review and approval. Hall announced that Joe DosSantos plans on retiring in July. Eric Oldenburg will be the new Avista WRTAC representative.

Agenda

There were no additions or revisions to the proposed agenda. Hall explained the draft 2016 AIP budget sheets carryover and 2016 expenditures may change between now and the MC meeting, as Avista is still in the process of closing out the 2015 books.

Maps with all permit and recreation site locations are available for review on the back table.

TRTAC ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Appendix G: Implementation of the Land Use Management Plan (LUMP)

Hall explained the purpose of the LUMP and reviewed the 2016 actions, tasks, and decisions.

In 2016, continue to implement the private recreation permit program and address issues related to ownership/trespass on Avista property. Last year 200 private permits were issued. As part of implementing this program, all new permits are issued as a shared use permit.

Hall provided an update related to the abandoned railroad property from Noxon Rapids Dam to Triangle Pond. Where FERC ruled in late 2014 to accept the status of these lands as being lands

of the United States. Hall will continue to work with the USFS to determine future management of these lands.

There is no news to report regarding the Revett (now Hecla Mining) requested easement for a discharge pipe associated with the proposed Rock Creek Mine. The USFS is working on a draft EIS.

The Pesticide and Herbicide Plan is similar to previous years; the overall strategy is to control noxious weeds while minimizing herbicide use when possible.

Avista continues to participate and provide funding for a facilitator for the Sanders County Aquatic Invasive Plants Task Force to further develop and refine an Integrated Management Plan. Continue the use of bottom barriers, operational level herbicide control of EWM and education efforts including brochures, signage, promotional items, and personal contacts. Provide funding, if needed, to support the Idaho boat check station located in Clark Fork.

The Land Use subgroup will update the LUMP this year, and will take a close look at permit fees and evaluate if a change in the fee structure is needed.

Avista continues to monitor project lands with photos, enforcement efforts and work with MFWP, IDFG, and other law enforcement agencies. Block management and the bi-annual recreation rule is currently used to provide MFWP conservation officers authority to address violations on Avista property.

Habbe Existing Dock Proposal was included in the TRTAC packet, but is not considered part of the 2016 AIPs. This request is supported by the Land Use Subgroup and requires TRTAC review and approval, since the addition will extend past the 60 foot dock limit described in the LUMP. The proposal is to extend an existing dock an additional 16 feet. This will allow the permit holder an additional foot of water depth, which is needed when water levels are low. This request will not affect fish and wildlife resources, will have minimal impact to aesthetics, and will not cause a navigation hazard to boat traffic.

The TRTAC approved the Habbe Proposal to extend the existing dock an additional 16 feet.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix G as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix H: Implementation of Recreation Resource Management Plan (RRMP)

Hall reviewed the purpose of Appendix H, and identified the seven goals to be met through its implementation.

Facility Development

The TRTAC members reviewed components of the 2016 Recreation Resource Facility Development Plan.

Thompson Falls State Park host site will be moved to a more appropriate location, as well as the addition of a second site. Dave Bennetts provided an update on the family fishing pond enhancements that occurred in 2015. Other projects include trail improvements around the pond, universally accessible fishing pier and picnic shelter, and relocating restroom facilities.

Monitoring

In 2016, the Recreation subgroup and a consultant will continue to work on updating the RRMP, which will be finalized in early 2017.

Continue to utilize automated traffic counters at popular recreation sites and trails. Pinnacle Research provided a 2015 summary report for automated traffic counters and a copy is located on the back table.

Operation and Maintenance

Continue providing low cost leases or permits to the community or civic groups providing recreation opportunities (i.e., Thompson Falls Golf Course).

Assist USFS and MFWP with the cost of operation and maintenance of sites under their management.

Interpretation and Education

Continue working with the CRMG on developing an educational display board for the interpretive teepee site at Pilgrim Creek Park; as well as inventorying and standardizing signage at all recreation sites.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix H as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix I: Aesthetics Management Plan

This plan provides guidance to protect aesthetic values as projects associated with the CFSA are implemented. In 2013, a 5-year re-inventory of 41 key viewpoints was performed to compare previous and current conditions. The report identified two areas where vegetation growth has obstructed view to the point of needing to change the view class. Discussions will continue with Montana DOT and Montana Rail Link to clear an area associated with the scenic turnout along Highway 200.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix I as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix J: Wildlife, Botanical and Wetland Management Plan

The Wildlife, Botanical and Wetland Management Plan was developed after relicensing to capture the background of terrestrial PM&Es. The plan is used to help guide implementation of the terrestrial PM&Es. Over the past 16 years approximately 89,000 acres have been protected in both Montana and Idaho.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix J as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix K: Wildlife Habitat Acquisition, Enhancement, and Management Program

Hall explained that \$4,000 is available for maintenance of the Bull River WMA properties (gates, signage, weed control, etc.). Continue working with MFWP to characterize springs, wetlands and potential enhancements on the Bull River WMA. Hall is working with MFWP and Ken Stevens to create a forestry management plan for the Bull River WMA.

Utilize \$60,000 for appraisals and for some of Kaniksu Land Trust time as needed in support of identifying and completing projects. Two properties were previously identified and will continue to be pursued in 2016. Once appraisals are completed, a funding request for purchase will be made to the MC. The first property of interest is a potential conservation easement on 415 acres along the Pack River. The second property is located west of Heron, MT and consists of 75 acres, of which 35 are wetlands. Appraisals for both properties are being completed and the projects continue to move forward.

A timber management plan will be developed for the Avista owned Trestle Creek properties (approximately 375 acres). Cost of the work will be shared between appendices A and K, with each program providing up to \$15,000.

Up to \$20,000 of the remaining balance will be used as needed for property taxes, power bills, appraisals, and other management issues associated with lands purchased with funding from this PM&E.

The remaining balance of approximately \$600,000 (estimated amount at this time) will be available for use to pursue the purchase and protect habitat as projects become available and go through the appropriate approval process.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix K as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix L: Black Cottonwood Habitat Protection and Enhancement

Hall explained that one goal of this program is to protect existing stands of black cottonwoods through the implementation of the LUMP. Efforts in 2016 will focus on the continued protection of black cottonwood stands and trees through the implementation of land use classifications in the LUMP.

In 2015, a temporary enclosure fence was built at the Herford Slough cottonwood site. Cottonwood generation was good within the enclosure; regeneration occurred from exposed roots, cutoff stumps, and seed germination. Efforts in 2016 include continued monitoring of the enclosure and conduct any fence maintenance that is needed.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix L as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix M: Wetlands Protection and Enhancement Program

Ducks Unlimited was hired in 2014 to collect baseline information and develop an early stage wetland enhancement plan for the Bull River wetland enhancement project. This effort was completed and a proposal was developed to increase habitat diversity by creating depressions with the spoils placed around the depressions to form low mounds. In 2015, field crews gathered additional water temperature and fisheries data for the site. In 2016, efforts will be focused on gathering additional information and discussions to determine if this project can be done without negatively impacting the springs that are important in providing cool water flow to the Bull River. Cousins suggested collecting native sedge seeds prior to initiating the project, as part of a volunteer project.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix M as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Hall stated as discussed at the September TRTAC meeting 2016 AIPs were not produced for appendices N1, N2, and N3.

Bald eagles were officially delisted in 2007. As agreed upon at the March 2013 MC meeting the continuation of this program would be evaluated annually as part of the development of the AIPs.

The number of known active bald eagle nest territories along the Clark Fork Project has doubled in the last 16 years, with three new territories identified in 2016.

Peregrine falcons were delisted in 1999, and the MC agreed to suspend the intentional monitoring program in 2005. Since that time three new nesting territories have been established along the Clark Fork Project.

Common loons have been monitored for indications of nesting behavior since 1999. This PM&E was unique in that there was a sunset to this program effective in 2008. In 2009, the MC agreed to scale back the efforts and funding for this program would be re-evaluated on an annual basis. No nesting behavior has been observed since the inception of this PM&E.

Hall proposed not including appendices N1, N2, and N3 in future AIPs and Annual Reports, as Avista has met the obligation under these appendices for the remainder of the current FERC License.

Hutchins asked would informal surveys continue to keep an eye on bird activity. Hall replied, absolutely, field crews will continue to keep an eye on nesting activity during other field activities. Cousins asked is there a database with monitoring information. Hall replied MFWP has a monitoring database. The TRTAC members requested annual updates on the informal surveys.

Avista will continue to informally monitor bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and common loon activity as part of other field duties and report observations to the TRTAC at their annual January meeting as part of Appendix J.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC members agreed to forward onto the MC for their consideration the removal of Appendix N1 (Bald Eagle Monitoring and Protection); Appendix N2 (Peregrine Falcon Monitoring and Protection); and N3 (Common Loon Monitoring and Protection Program) from the list of ongoing Clark Fork Settlement Agreement PM&Es.

Appendix P: Forest Habitat Protection and Enhancement

The purpose of this measure is to provide for the protection and enhancement of specific forest habitat parcels of Avista project land along the reservoirs.

Continue work efforts on controlling trespass (gates, fences), and provide hunter access to specific sites as part of the MFWP Block Management Program.

The timber stand improvement project at Stevens Creek Bay on Noxon Reservoir was completed in 2015, with follow-up planting and cleanup to occur this year.

Areas classified as Conservation I afford the maximum protection provided through the LUMP. Copper Flats is managed to minimize impacts to the site. Continue working with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and CRMG in managing the Copper Flats area for traditional plants and uses.

The MFWP Block Management Program provided public access on three parcels in 2015. Public access to the Wood Duck property is open year-round and administered through a sign-in box at the access point.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix P as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix Q: Reservoir Island Protection

Hall explained that this PM&E was developed in recognition of the importance in protecting the Avista owned island habitat along the project area. One example of this work occurred in 2010, when a road to the islands near Trout Creek was blocked off with large rocks and a parking area was created.

There is no budget associated with this PM&E for 2016, as the activities are covered under the implementation of the LUMP.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix Q as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix S: Erosion Fund and Shoreline Stabilization Guidelines

In 2016, work efforts will focus on addressing erosion concerns identified by the CRMG; and utilize engineering assistance to help evaluate erosion control proposals received by Avista from adjacent landowners.

Project scoping and permitting was initiated in 2014 to address erosion at the Laundry Site and permitting will be completed this year.

Design possible erosion control measures at the Finley Flats boat ramp as part of a larger project to evaluate and redesign the parking area. Provide technical assistance for an erosion project proposed by an adjacent landowner in the Vermilion Point area.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix S as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Next Meeting

The next TRTAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 14, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. in Noxon. Hall thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The TRTAC meeting ended at 12:25 p.m. (MST).