

**Meeting Summary
Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project
Teleconference**

**Intercept Survey Pretest Debriefing Call for TWG Stakeholders
Monday, March 18, 2013, 2:00 pm**

Attendees:

Organization	Name
AEA	Sandy Hayes
VNF	Charles Sensiba
McDowell Group	Donna Logan
McDowell Group	Bob Koenitzer
URS	Tim Kramer
URS	Kaley Volper
NPS	Harry Williamson
NPS	Cassie Thomas
CIRI	Dara Glass
Northern Economics	Jonathan King
Susitna Dam Alternatives	Becky Long

Surveyor Field Training & Survey Pretesting Schedule – Bob (McDowell Group)

Bob described how the field training and intercept survey pretesting activities took place in the Talkeetna area from March 13 through March 17, 2013 noting the following events:

- 3/14 – Supervisors met in Talkeetna and toured potential sample locations
- 3/15 – Twelve surveyors and supervisors met in Talkeetna for training (12pm-3:15pm) and field testing (3:15pm-5:30pm)
- 3/16 – Field testing in and around Talkeetna (9:00am-5:30pm)
- 3/17 – Field testing (9:00am-11:30), including Alaska Railroad (4:00pm-6:00pm)

Bob noted that the field testing coincided with the Oosik Classic, a 25km/50km cross country ski race which was held in Talkeetna on March 16th. The weather was excellent (cold and clear) and there were a lot of people recreating in the area, which made it a good weekend to conduct the survey pretest. Surveyors found that surveying in 2-3 hour bursts worked well in cold weather. Surveyors and supervisors met at the end of each day to debrief and discuss possible changes to the survey.

Harry Williamson (NPS) asked if the survey used in pretesting was the same version stakeholders received on March 7. Bob indicated that an updated survey instrument was used and it included a new question about recreation conflicts.

Pretest Locations – Bob (McDowell Group)

Bob went over the 11 survey sites in and around Talkeetna as well as activities observed at each site. The Talkeetna sample locations were Chase Trailhead Parking Lot, Talkeetna Gravel Bar, The Overlook, Ski Hill (just past the overlook), Talkeetna Lakes Park Entrance, XY Lake Parking Area, Christian Lake Park Entrance, Larson Creek Trailhead, Tigger Lake Rd. Parking Area, Fish Lake Parking, and Montana Creek Falls Trailhead. Surveys were also conducted at Maclaren Lodge and Lake Louise Lodge.

Cassie Thomas (NPS) inquired if surveyors had made it to the west Denali Highway plow limit on Saturday. Bob responded that they did not make it to the plow limit Saturday, but surveyors did make it to the Denali Highway entrance on Sunday (March 17).

Revisions Prior to Pretest – Bob (McDowell Group)

Bob explained the changes made to the survey prior to the pretest. The only significant change was the inclusion of a question about recreation conflicts which replaced a question about the location of particularly memorable scenery (determined to be the “softest” question). The conflict question, requested by NPS at previous TWG meetings and in their comments submitted by email on March 5, asks survey participants if they experienced a conflict with other people that negatively impacted their recreation. The new “conflict” questions also have two follow up questions about what activity the other party was engaged in and what specifically caused the conflict.

This prompted Cassie Thomas (NPS) to ask how surveyors take down answers to potentially long-winded open-ended questions. Bob said that surveyors do their best to capture the answer in a couple of sentences. The surveyors have been trained to repeat the question and their noted answer to the survey participant and then ask if their response was properly characterized.

Survey Revisions During Pretest – Bob (McDowell Group)

Bob described the minor changes made to the survey following the pretest, highlighting that no fundamental changes were made. Minor adjustments and changes included the reordering of questions, fixing a typo, slight rewording, formatting changes, and slightly altering introduction and post-survey statements. One question was altered because people who live in the study area might also camp or stay overnight in the study area so the question had to be changed to be more open on choices.

Survey and Tally Completions – Bob (McDowell Group)

When moving to the topic about completed surveys, Cassie Thomas (NPS) asked how long the surveys took to complete. Bob indicated that survey completion time ranged from eight to 20 minutes and on average took 12 minutes. Many of the Talkeetna surveys were people who were in the area for the Oosik Classic and likely had less complicated responses because they only participated in one or two types of recreation activity during that outing than may be expected during the summer or hunting season. Bob said he expects surveys to take 10-12 minutes when participants have less complex answers and 12-15 minutes on average.

Bob said that surveyors were highly visible and wore brightly colored vests. People were generally enthusiastic about the survey; some even volunteered to participate without being asked.

Cassie Thomas (NPS) wanted to know how many people walked away from the survey in frustration. Bob said there was only one incomplete and that was because the participant's friends were waiting on him/her. Bob added that between two and four people refused to participate because they were cold or busy and the refusal rate was low considering the frigid temperatures.

Cassie Thomas (NPS) then asked about how McDowell Group would avoid selection bias. Bob indicated that surveyors would stop at different locations at different times of the day during winter months and surveyors would drive the road network loop clockwise one week and counter-clockwise the next. When surveyors encounter a large group of people they would divide them into groups and only select a couple of participants from each group. Bob also said McDowell Group would also decide if they needed to weigh the results based on activities or user groups to avoid bias.

Cassie Thomas (NPS) followed up by enquiring how participants would be selected from a group. Bob said that surveyors were instructed to use mechanical means so as not to bias their selection. An example would be to "split" the area into quadrants and select one participant from one quadrant. In the next situation they would select from the next quadrant, etc. In the next situation they would select from the next quadrant, etc.

Harry Williamson (NPS) asked if surveyors needed to use the "Don't Know/Refused" code blocks. Bob said that while people are generally willing to talk about recreation, they don't always know the answers to specific questions. For example, not everyone in a group will know the total cost of the outing (i.e. a friend booked the trip).

Bob said that in Talkeetna and along the Parks Highway 38 surveys and 35 tally sheets were completed. Additionally six surveys and two tally sheets were completed at Lake Louise Lodge and five surveys were completed at Maclaren Lodge. He also mentioned that tally sheets will be revised to include more categories (motor coach, ski racks, kayak racks, etc.).

Next Steps – Donna (McDowell Group)

Donna explained that the refinements to the intercept survey thus far will be carried over to the mail survey and she mentioned important upcoming dates.

- March 22: Stakeholder comments are due
- March 22-29: Intercept and mail surveys will be finalized and additional pretests will occur
- March 29: Final instruments submitted to AEA
- April 1: Expected first day of "official" intercept surveys

Cassie Thomas (NPS) commented that the revisions seem rational and asked if McDowell Group would distribute copies of the revised survey to the stakeholders. McDowell Group responded that they would consult with AEA about a potential redistribution of the survey instrument.

Cassie also commented that the survey seemed like it would be useful beyond the Watana Project.

Becky Long (Susitna Dam Alternatives) asked if McDowell Group would use the data collected during the pretest. McDowell Group answered that the data can be used if the final version of the

survey is similar enough to the pretest version. Bob and Donna emphasized that the pretest was a success and the survey crews are well qualified.

Action Items

- McDowell Group: Ask AEA if they would like the revised survey to be redistributed to stakeholders.