

Habitat Study, Debris Study and Aquatic Vegetation Study Workgroup Meetings August 10, 2006

Participants:

Bill Kittrell – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)
John Copeland – VDGIF
Wayne Alexander – Appalachian Power Company
Brian Watson – VDGIF
Mike Pinder – VDGIF
John Smith – Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
Laura Walters – Friends of Claytor Lake (FOCL)
Mary Rhodes – FOCL
Larry Bandolin – Citizen
Matthew Chan – Normandeau Associates
Mike Spraker - FOCL
Jay Wylie – Devine Tarbell and Associates (DTA)
Kristi Miller - DTA
Jon Magalski – American Electric Power
Teresa Rogers – Appalachian Power Company

Wetlands, Riparian, Woody Debris and Littoral Habitat Study

Objectives of this study were reviewed.

Clarification: Jurisdictional wetlands: This is a wetland defined by Corps Of Engineers (COE) as a wetland in which they have jurisdiction and which meet COE's parameters.

Question: Is there an element of "quality" of the wetland in this study? Response: Study will include an assessment of the quality of the wetland (species types, hydrology, hydric soils, etc.) Transect profiles will show wetlands at full pond, normal pool and drawdown.

Clarification: In the scoping document, FERC's cumulative affects for some resources will extend outside of the project boundary, but this doesn't modify the project boundary.

Comment: Downstream willow beds: Can the downstream willow beds be picked up as part of this study? Response: Willow beds can be a habitat that is looked at during the instream flow needs study.

Comment: FERC wants to know the impact of fluctuations of water elevations on habitat in reservoir.

Comment: Impacts of flow on habitat downstream is important to look at. Response: If habitat is within riverbed, then it can be included as part of the Instream Flow Needs Study.

Comment: What is the issue regarding willow beds downstream of the dam? Response: Dewatering and scour of water willow beds by fluctuating water levels downstream is the issue.

Comment: Aerial photographs will be taken of the downstream area as part of the relicensing. These may show these beds.

Question: Instream Flow Needs Study: Can we map water willow beds within this study? Response: Water willow beds can be incorporated as a habitat type into IFIM study. We can specify that a transect(s) be placed at a water willow bed.

Comment: HEP Study requested by COE: This is a way to put a number to the habitat. Pick indicator species and then determine their needed habitat. Response: We are not proposing an HEP study, but we may be able to collect the habitat data in a way that it will be useful to COE at a later date.

Question: Why would we need to do this type of study? Response: The HEP is used more for a mitigation management tool. By defining these habitat numbers then you will know how to mitigate to offset the loss of the habitat.

Question: Will the number of acres of wetlands be provided? Response: Yes.

Clarification: The woody debris that is part of this study should be called “anchored woody debris” not “beneficial woody debris”.

Comment: FERC is going to want to know how the project operations affect the habitat. CHANGE: Geographic scope for this study should be “area where reservoir fluctuations have an impact” instead of “project boundary.” This will help make the distinction.

Comment: The bald eagle nest observation can be incorporated into the littoral habitat survey portion of this study. Make this non-public information. It would be helpful to know where known sites are located. Ask FOCL if they know of any known sites.

Question: Mapping efforts of wetlands: Do we want to map areas less than 1/10th acre? Need input from group. Response: Wetlands are located in backs of coves and in areas where there is sediment. There are very few wetlands on Claytor Lake and they are very small. VDGIF will provide an opinion.

Comment: There is a need to go out on the lake to see how few there are. The wetlands that are out there need to be protected.

Comment: Substrate will be taken at aquatic vegetation sites. Bathymetry will provide underwater elevations.

Comment: FERC will need information on important spawning areas from this study. If Appalachian is looking at changing operations during spawning, then FERC will need to know more information about the habitat impacted at various drawdown elevations.

Comment: Bathymetry will provide information about slope and depth. Substrate composition is the only missing piece.

Question: Can 1 ft. contours for the top portion of the lake be provided? Response: This is something that Appalachian will have to check on. We have proposed 2' contours for the bathymetry.

Question: How will the study determine the effects of construction on littoral habitat? Response: First, look at what species are of interest, when they occupy the area, and then make an assessment if pile driving will have an impact.

Question: Will the study quantify the amount? Response: One method is to review previous photos and new photos to come up with number of docks built over the last few years and then determine size and resulting loss of area.

Comment: Important part is for future development, to determine how much littoral habitat is lost over time. Need more details on the construction impact details.

Debris Study

Study objectives were reviewed.

Comment: Need to look at Appalachian Power's right of way clearing practices. Right now they leave it in the right of way. Response: Debris is supposed to be kept out of stream. If this is happening, it may be the result of failure to communicate with subcontractors about what not to do. Appalachian will follow up on this.

Comment: FOCL is only able to tell us how much has been taken out, not what is out there.

Native and Exotic Aquatic Vegetation

Study objectives were reviewed.

Clarification: Appalachian is not planning on flying in the fall (2006). Decent existing aeriels off the Internet should be available.

Comment: Not flying this fall could be a problem. New sights have developed since last year. FOCL has some photos of lake. Response: Flying is very expensive and may not be able to verify everything. It is also time dependant (needs to be done in the fall) and water clarity is an issue.

Comment: Lake Gaston flies every year to determine location hydrilla beds. Response: Timing is an issue because to fly next fall (2007) would leave very little time to do any other sampling before the end of the study period. The final study plan determination will not be issued until Nov. 2006, which will not allow enough time to get the contractor in place for this year.

Comment: Hydrilla concentrations are above the bridge. Appalachian should talk with Chad Cooley (contractor) about last year's survey.

Comment: Appalachian will be surveying the entire lake for all types of submerged vegetation. Photos will be taken at all sites. Sites will be ground truthed to determine what type of vegetation is present.

Question: What is the number of transects that is needed? What is the goal?

Comment: VDGIF's impression: Species level identification is needed to determine the amount of different species in order to observe the diversity of vegetation.

Comment: Project operations may affect the spread of hydrilla.

Comment: This study should provide baseline conditions so vegetation can be monitored. The existing aerial photos can provide first cut of where to look. Transects will be used to determine the composition of beds. Three sample points per transect are suggested. Existing aerial photographs can be used as a screening tool. Then 5% of vegetation that is out there can be sampled.

Comment: A boat survey instead of photographs could be done, but the upper ends may be difficult to navigate.

Comment: Determine number of discreet beds before deciding number of transects.

Comment: VDGIF wants to make sure that the vegetation is quantified and ground truthed.

Meeting adjourned.