

Recreation Use Initial Study Plan Workgroup Meeting
August 21, 2006
1:00 pm

Participants:

Bill Kittrell – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
John Copeland – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Bob Munson – Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Jack Hannula – Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Brad Buchanan – Montgomery County Parks and Recreation
Laura Bullard – Friends of Claytor Lake and landowner
Laura Walters – Friends of Claytor Lake and landowner
Frank Simms – American Electric Power
Jot Splenda – The Louis Berger Group
Matthew Chan – Normandeau Associates
John Smith – FERC (conference call)
Teresa Rogers – Appalachian Power Company

Teresa Rogers reviewed of the purpose of the workgroup and a handout was provided. The ILP Flowchart and Claytor Relicensing Process Plan was distributed.

Jot Splenda of The Louis Berger Group reviewed the study plan objectives and relicensing relevance.

Revision of Geographic scope: Downstream – Change to include recreation survey of the New River downstream of the dam to 460 bridge.

Lake data collection spot counts, interviews, auto counters: Claytor dam picnic area, state park, Dublin, DeHaven, Rock House, Conrads, Lowmans Ferry, Allisonia. Downstream public access sites: Propose to segment downstream area into three zones. Spot count to see how many cars plus interview to determine number of people, activities, etc. River Access points – Same time schedule: March 1 – Oct. 31, 9 days per month, 3 zones, 6 weekend/ 3 weekdays. 8 hour sampling day – we will spend 8 hours per zone – bus route type of survey.

Comment: It was noted that the Radford Municipal ramp is minimally used. Dudley's Landing should be used instead of Radford Municipal.

Comment: A lot of the sites get traffic at late hours and evening. Need to capture this evening time. Weight afternoon heavier than morning. It will vary by season too.

Question: Will we correlate flow data with recreation? Response: We can correlate to gauge reading at the time and to operations. We can note reservoir water levels the days of the survey.

Comment: It is going to be important to get baseline information on recreation.

Comment: VDGIF used on-water type of survey to get to people accurately.

Revision: Other points to consider: Study plan says 1000 surveys. We are proposing that the study capture as many as possible and report the significance level of this number.

Question: 60 miles radius: Is this the correct distance that should be used? VDGIF survey results indicate that over 75% of people visiting travels <50 miles. Getting a lot more visitations to Claytor from other places. 60 miles from the dam: This is probably a good figure – the majority of folks will travel one hour to recreate.

Comment: VDCR has projected an increase in canoeing use on New River when their maps come out (final stages – 1 year away). How do we capture current use and use this in planning for need to get around the dam? What is the formula for anticipating future need and whether it is an issue?

Interviews will capture where people are coming from – ask in interview if they are multi-day trippers.

Comment: It will be a challenge deciding what to do about the future. Locals know there is no portage and plan accordingly. The Blueways Map they are developing show the New River as a long linear park – you can plan a trip for various lengths. Shuttle from State Park? Need something in our heads to get around the dam.

Comment: Socioeconomics: Good chance to collect data on money spent by downstream recreationalists. Interviews will capture expenditure data. Consumer surplus – how much would they be willing to spend? To be discussed as part of the interview details prior to field work.

Comment: Looking at current conditions – recreation based on current conditions. There is a plan out there where recreation will increase downstream – incorporate these plans into the evaluation. (5 partners to MOU in developing Blue Trail)

Survey questions will be worked out before the fieldwork, in consultation with the workgroup. Survey along the New River Trail – Bob Munson can send to us so we can see what questions were asked.

Comment: Beginner kayak classes have picked up at Montgomery County Parks and Recreation. A lot of people are from West Virginia, Botetourt County, North Carolina.

Comment: Mail in survey of regional recreational use – angler use numbers may not be accurate for all recreation use.

Question: How do we characterize activities at McCoy Falls? If they are not putting in at a public access point, it may not be captured. Response: Almost need to include time along the shoreline stretch at McCoy Falls. Need to add “range of area” for McCoy Falls. Can also count cars along road – but these cars will have more than one person – may need to count heads.

Comment: The recreational use downstream is different from the lake. May need to have additional questions and techniques to capture downstream use.

Question: What is the average length of float? Response: There are three major floating sections: McCoy to Eggleston, Radford Section, Pembroke to Bluff City.

Comment: There is a lot of dispersed use on New River and a lot of access points.

Comment: Road frontage areas: McCoy to Eggleston and Narrows. Bisette Park in Radford.

Comment: Can interview livery guys on how many boats have been launched.

Comment: Stretches to count – McCoy to Eggleston, Radford, Pembroke to Bluff City

Survey downstream to upstream each time so you don't double count.

Comment: Proposed zones look good.

Comment: Peppers Ferry – boat fisherman will put in and travel down to Whitethorne – count cars.

Comment: Peppers Ferry Bridge – diving occurs here. Information can be obtained from dive shops.

Question: Lake – boating survey by aerial photography – do we want to expand downstream? 11 am – 3 pm is peak time on lake for flying – it would characterize downstream recreation canoe, boating, etc. The best you could get would be instantaneous counts of number of people and what they are doing. This could supplement interview data. Response: We can ask pilot if this is possible. But you still have to have interview data. Possibility: Flyover if it isn't a bus trip day for a couple of times a summer. Flyovers over a shorter period of time. Could provide a good ground truthing of bus trip day.

Comment: Parks and Recreation and outfitters have rosters of those they have taken on the lake.

Question: What will we use this downstream recreation use information for?
Response: This will provide baseline information. It will give us a better understanding the needs and importance of downstream recreation for future project operations. Dollar figures will show value of downstream recreation. It will provide information on the economic impact of operations. Events are scheduled around flows. This will help us determine how compatible flow needs for fishery are with flow needs for recreation. May result in different flow scenarios that work well for recreation.

Comment: State Park has information on usage and they can tell us when the beach has to be closed due to lake levels. Harry Dehaven also has a beach.

Recreation survey on lake – boating density information will be obtained through aerial photography.

Future recreation use 50 years out will be predicted.

Comment: Lake capacity is determined by access. VDGIF ramps only have so many parking places.

Boating density information will be used by the Shoreline Management Guideline Workgroup to help in making decisions on future development along the shoreline.

Mail in survey will be used to gather recreational information.

Question: Page 9 – How many flyovers will we need to get statistically significant data? Has to be enough information to make decisions. 100 days in sampling period, 10% - 11% sample – will this get us there? Response: From past experience, use doesn't dramatically change between weekdays or weekends, there is a difference between weekdays and weekends. Holiday weekend use is peak.

Friday – is considered weekday by Berger. VDGIF has used Mon-Thurs as weekday and Fri-Sun as weekend.

When the clerks are doing surveys, they will note temperature and weather. Over the period of survey, you are capturing all uses under all scenarios.

Comment: 11 days may not be enough for downstream bus routes. Response: For bus route: 9 days per month. Lake will get more – statistically significant number.

Comment: Specifics should be in September 11th study plan.

The September 11th Draft Study Plan Amendments doesn't have to be a formal filing. Sept. 18th comment on the proposed study plan and then state

the you have worked in the workgroup and see that these comments have been addressed in the markup red-line plan provided by Appalachian.

Methodology in number of days will be part of a continued discussion during the Angler Use Study Workgroup and will be included in red-lined markup.

Question: What recreation activities will we be evaluating? Response: In exit interview we will ask what they are doing, in mail survey we can ask what types of recreation they participate in. A complete survey will be determined within the workgroup meeting prior to the survey being finalized.

Comment: Rental cabins are available at the State Park.

Question: Are we going to assess aesthetic areas on the lake? From a state wide fishing survey, aesthetics is very important. Also these wooded areas provide benefits to wildlife, water quality, etc. Response: Questions on aesthetics would be covered in the interview and surveys.

Comment: Include perceptions of crowding and aesthetics in the survey. Include aesthetics downstream. Response: Study will most likely use same questionnaire upstream and downstream.

Comment: Question for survey – What detracted from your recreational experience? What enhanced your recreational experience?

Comment: How do different recreation groups relate with each other?

Comment: VDGIF will provide boating accident data.

Questionnaire will be developed by the workgroup prior to going out in the field. We can circulate to the workgroup prior to the meeting so participants will be prepared to discuss.

Meeting adjourned.