

## **Angler Use Workgroup**

**August 22, 2006**

**8:00**

### Participants:

John Copeland – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Bill Kittrell – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Jack Hannula – Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Matthew Chan – Normandeau Associates

Frank Simms – American Electric Power

Jot Splenda – The Louis Berger Group

John Massey-Norton – American Electric Power

Teresa Rogers – Appalachian Power Company

John Smith – FERC (conference call)

Jot Splenda of The Louis Berger Group began with a review of the study objectives. These include quantify angler use, demographics, and expenditures in Claytor Lake and at the VDGIF boat ramp immediately downstream of Claytor dam.

Methods: On water surveys (roving creel), March 1 – October 31 (this is different from the proposed study plan), 10 days/month, 2 zones (upper and lower); equal weight, 5 weekdays, 5 weekend days, length of survey time determined by avg. daylight for the month minus ½ hour after sunrise or before sunset and divided by 2. AM or PM focus – start time dependent on the month and day length

Below Claytor Lake Dam at boat ramp– same time period as the roving water surface surveys, minimum: 2 weekdays and 2 weekends per month.

Combination access point / roving survey: Roving component to intercept all anglers on water and bank fisherman. Access point will be at the Claytor dam boat ramp. The recreation study will capture trailer counts and exit interviews at the other public access sites. This will avoid redundant information.

Day light for month – legal sunrise / sunset. Length: Survey time determined by avg. daylight for the month minus ½ hour after sunrise or before sunset and divided by 2.

Comment: Spring fishery in upper lake area and Peak Creek. May need to shift zones seasonally. May need to sample one zone more frequently. VDGIF can look at 1999 survey on trailer counts to get weighting information.

Boundary of lower zone - Harry Dehaven to dam. Peak Creek arm and main river channel up to Allisonia will be the other zone.

Question: Will this include holidays? Response: Yes – Consultant will have someone on water sampling during 3 Holidays.

Comment: VDGIF can provide information on weighting (frequency factors) – zone and am/pm weighting.

Question: Will there be instantaneous count? Response: yes - one hour instantaneous count to capture all boats within zone then go back and do interviews. Count will be at either the beginning, middle, or the end of the work day, randomly chosen and incorporated into the final schedule.

Trailer counts will be part of the recreation study. This will also show additional capacity for parking at the sites.

A lot of work will be involved in developing the questionnaires for the angler use and the recreational use surveys. 1<sup>st</sup> draft of questionnaires will be distributed to the workgroup for consideration. The workgroup will meet post study plan determination and prior to start of study to finalize the questionnaires.

Comment: Roving survey is not a completed trip however you are intercepting stripper fishermen and people who live at the lake. Better cross section of the lake. Most of VDGIF has been access point surveys. There are tradeoffs with both ways.

Roving creel will capture lake residents that do not utilize public launch sites and who may be on the lake a shorter period of time.

Question: Can you get average trip length on roving creel? Response: Can ask how long have you been fishing, how much longer do you plan to fish.

Comment: May need to include a minimum time on the water in the questionnaire before asking more detailed information on fishing.

Comment: Can use random times to decide when to do instantaneous counts – beginning, middle and end – so you aren't doing the instantaneous counts the same time every visit.

Question: There is a night angling component especially in the evening times. Any ideas on how to capture night fishing? Response: The survey tool can ask do you night fish, for what, how often. There is some concern approaching people at night on the lake.

Recreation survey will have traffic counters that will capture access at night. There are typically 2 people per vehicle at night.

Question: Relative to relicensing – what will angler use survey this provide to us? Response: The values of the recreational fishery is important – project operation can potentially impact fishery through lake level fluctuations and altering of fish habitat. It is good to have baseline information to give us indication of the recreational fishery going into relicensing. It is also important to look at survey on the river too. VDGIF has some historic information on fishing in the river but it was done during a drought. Changes are taking place in the reservoir and downstream based on things going on around the state – more people are coming to this area to fish because of factors occurring at other lakes and fishing pressure is increasing.

Comment: A huge component of recreation downstream is fishing. Biggest change is the increase in fishing pressure on hybrid striped bass on lake. Wall eye is being stocked from wall eye on the New River and they are using the lake.

The recreation survey will also capture where people are coming from. The recreation and angler use will be same sampling times.

Comment: VDGIF typically start at 8:00 – 8:30 in the morning with survey on the river. On the lake, the times were different.

Comment: ½ hour after sunrise and ½ hour after sunset – you will not get many interviews before 8 o'clock in the morning.

Recreational Use access point survey – ½ hour after sunrise may get some of the people who are coming off the water at daylight.

Goal is to maximize interviews.

Comment: Night fishing people – There are a lot of shift workers who may do all fishing at night. During the summer there are tournaments at night. Big increase in bass fishing at night during summer months.

Question: Any value in sampling quality of experience? Response: Can include question about experience on survey.

Comment: Economic component is critical to include in survey. In years past, data was collected on trip expenditures only. Now, consumer surplus – how much are you willing to spend - is captured.

Comment: FERC would like questions that indicate potential conflict between uses. This is becoming an issue for FERC.

Question: Can we document sizes of fish caught and released? Response: With an access point angler use survey for the completed trip, one can weigh fish that are kept. It is tough to weigh fish during roving creel survey but doable.

Comment: Can limit length information to specified species - strippers and hybrids. Response: Adding questions to surveys is not a problem – can ask size range. May have to make a determination of whether we can measure dependent on the number of fish caught – want to make sure we get the interviews done as the priority. If there aren't many fish then measuring is more feasible.

Comment: Estimating around 30 – 50 fish – Morone. Can survey by using ruler and photograph.

Comment: Important that the public is informed at access points that survey is going on and let them know they may be approached.

Comment: It will be of value to get at fish lengths of Morone. VDGIF has found that typically the fishermen are willing for you to measure.

Question: Any need to continue survey during drawdown? Response: We are not proposing to continue into drawdown. Can ask in the questionnaire questions about the impact of fall drawdown on recreation and fishing.

Comment: Lake survey portion good. Question: Geographic scope downstream – can we extend angler use downstream? Angler usage is flow dependent. Historical data is available? Can we role the angler use into recreation survey and modify intensity? Information needed: preference, attitude information, catch, harvest, release information.

Question: Could we use the catch and harvest information from 2002 survey and the rest of the information from recreation survey related to fishing experience? Put all information together to assess downstream fishing?  
Response: 2002 was a dry year so this may have impacted the catch.

Comment: Fishability – different flow needs for different types of fishing.

Recreation survey will ask what activity, attitudes and preferences (conflicts, detractors, enhancements, was flow appropriate for our activity)

Comment: Catch rates – impact people’s enjoyment of experience – relative to flow rates.

Proposed revision: The recreational survey can include fishing related questions for downstream. No changes in schedule for recreation survey. What they are fishing for and what they caught can be asked. Won’t mirror 2002 survey.

Comment: Challenge would be catching people as they are coming off the water.

No roving component to the downstream angler use questions.

Example of possible questions for survey:

What time they started fishing (your trip)

Time they are planning to quit.

What fishing for?

Small mouth bass released, size ranges

Correlate questions about flows, experience, conflicts, etc.

Economic component

Details of surveys will be worked out within workgroup prior to going out in the field.

Meeting adjourned.