



**Nuyakuk River Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 14873)
Public Meeting
June 8, 2022
5:30-7:30PM (Alaska Time)
Nushagak Cooperative Board Room and GoTo Meeting
557 Kenny Wren Road
Dillingham, AK 99576**

Introductions and Meeting Logistics

Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) introduced himself and stated the meeting intent, which was to update the local community on the Nuyakuk River Hydroelectric Project (Project) and hear comments and feedback from community members. He stated that the Aquatic Resources Work Group (ARWG) met in person earlier in the day, following a site visit that occurred Tuesday, June 6, 2022. The members of the ARWG introduced themselves. Nushagak Cooperative Board members also introduced themselves, including Henry Strub, Annie Fritze, and Sue Flensburg. Table 1 lists meeting participants and affiliation.

Project Status and Updates

Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) reviewed the current Project status and schedule, and key developments reached over the past year. During that time, the Aquatic Resources Work Group (ARWG) formed and worked to develop the Proposed Study Plan (PSP). The PSP comment period ends on June 30, 2022 and the Cooperative would like any input and encourages public participation in the ongoing assessment of Project feasibility.

Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) described the site visit that the ARWG participated in on Tuesday. The river flow was approximately 17,100 cfs during the site visit. A stream gage was successfully installed at the Project site earlier this week. Thermologgers with approximately 4 years of data were located and downloaded during the site visit. The ARWG members walked both shorelines of the falls to obtain a better perspective on both the falls and the Project location. Several members of the ARWG shared their observations of the site based on the site visit. The site visit enabled ARWG members to visually assess the applicability of fishery study methods based on site characteristics. The presentation included several photos and videos of the Project site.

Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) presented next steps for the remainder of 2022. Several site visits will be conducted to gather additional information in 2022. The Project team and the ARWG will revise the PSP to create a Revised Study Plan (RSP) based on

comments received and site visit observations. After the RSP is filed with FERC (no later than July 30, 2022), a 15-day comment period will initiate, concluding on August 14, 2022. After that time, FERC will issue a Study Plan Determination (SPD). Other activities at the Project site during the remainder of 2022 include completion of the cabins on-site and a geotechnical analysis, planned for August 2022 to confirm the geologic conditions of the Project site.

In 2023 and beyond, the Cooperative plans to meet with the public to engage with the local community, including the outlying villages, and receive feedback in person. Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) stated that the region needs renewable energy, and this Project may be a viable option, depending on the outcome of feasibility studies. Studies will be conducted and follow-up study reporting will occur during 2023 and 2024. If the Project is deemed viable following the conclusion of the natural resource study program, a Preliminary Licensing Proposal (PLP) and Final License Application (FLA) will be developed and filed with FERC.

A map of the regional Project vicinity including transmission lines was shown, along with a Project site map. Mr. Kevin Jensen (McMillen Jacobs Associates) explained the Project concept, layout, and facilities. He pointed out that a groin may not be necessary for Project operations. If one is needed, it would likely be constructed out of boulders sourced from on-site tunnelling rather than concrete.

Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) mentioned that the Cooperative and NMFS have agreed on a climate change study that will be conducted as part of the Project's natural resource study program.

Ms. Thushara Gunda (Sandia National Laboratory) presented the Economic Decision Support Tool (eDST) that's currently under development for the Project. The eDST tool is intended to facilitate evaluation of Project economics under different scenarios. Ms. Gunda and Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) emphasized that subsistence fishing is not a component of the eDST, because if any impacts to subsistence fishing are identified, the Project will be considered not viable. The front end of the eDST will be a user-friendly interface for easy manipulation of input and result visualization.

The public was invited to provide comments or ask questions of the Project team.

Ms. Lindsay Layland (United Tribes of Bristol Bay) asked what resources the community has available to understand the PSP and the technical information contained within the document, particularly with respect to fish studies and methods. Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) responded that the PSP is designed to be understandable by the public. Dr. MaryLouise Keefe (Kleinschmidt Associates) added that for the fish studies, it would be useful to look at the introduction to each study to read the primary questions and objectives associated with each study. Mr. Bryan Nass (Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute) added that Appendix C of the PSP presents the key questions and objectives in bullet format. Ms. Ali Eskelin (Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Wood-Tikchik State Park) stated that the public would benefit from a thorough explanation of the Fish First Resolution, as many people have different interpretations of what the Resolution means.

Ms. Alannah Hurley (United Tribes of Bristol Bay) asked for a definition of Project feasibility. Mr. Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) responded that the ARWG has been formed to obtain the technical information needed for the public and stakeholders to make decisions regarding Project feasibility. Ms. Hurley stated that there has been difficulty with working through the federal process for other Projects in the region. Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) and Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) stated that there is a genuine intent of the Cooperative to gather information, work with the local community, and ensure that all a robust Project feasibility assessment is conducted.

Mr. Scott Schumaker (Royal Coachman Lodge) stated that he fishes the Nuyakuk Falls area approximately 40 to 50 days per year. They're concerned about the wilderness aspect of the area changing as a result of the Project. Mr. Schumaker stated that kings hatch out and go down. Pinks, king, coho in addition to sockeye. Also rainbow, grayling, and lake trout. Dr. MaryLouise Keefe (R2/Kleinschmidt Associates) stated that there's great potential to address resident species and that's been extensively discussed by the ARWG during the past several days. Sockeye and chinook are target species for analysis using the LCM, because these species have the most data available. The other species will be evaluated in a less quantitative manner due to less available data for these species. Mr. Lee Borden (Alaska Department of Fish and Game) stated that he regularly brings up resident fish species during ARWG meetings and discussions and he advocates for analysis of any potential impacts to these species. Mr. Schumaker asked if tourism was addressed by the economic model. Ms. Thushara Gunda (Sandia National Laboratory) responded that tourism is currently not included but could be addressed and included. Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) added that the recreation studies will evaluate fishing. Mr. Schumaker stated that he would be willing to provide data on fishing activities at his lodge to add to available Project datasets.

Dennis Andrew from New Stuyahok stated that there's a fish counting tower and there's a lot of silver salmon that go up the river. He stated that there are a lot of fish that go up to the lake and he doesn't agree that the area should be utilized for power production due to potential impacts to fish populations. Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) responded that there is no dam as part of the Project concept, and that he understands Mr. Andrew's concerns regarding impacts to fish populations and for that reason, Project feasibility is being evaluated.

Kristina Andrew (Bristol Bay Native Association) stated that the villages need to be able to decide if they want to be included in Project transmission. Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) responded that he is fully aware Villages need to consent to the Project being constructed in their villages.

Ms. Ali Eskelin (Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Wood-Tikchik State Park) stated that some studies were requested by community members didn't meet FERC study request requirements and were denied. She requested that those studies be included in the Project study plan as they are important to the community and region. Ms. Eskelin stated that the methods described in the Recreation Inventory study wouldn't work in the area and that more robust, in-person methods are required to adequately assess recreation resources and impacts to them.

Ms. Lisa Ilutsik (Community Member) stated that the management goals for Wood-Tikchik State Park are to preserve a pristine environment. Ms. Ilutsik stated that she is opposed to seeing transmission lines or infrastructure in the State Park. Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) responded that he appreciates Ms. Ilutsik's comments. He provided some background information that the Cooperative worked with the Alaska state legislature to obtain permission to conduct studies within Wood-Tikchik State Park. The state park charter contains provisions for hydroelectric development within the park. Ms. Ali Eskelin (Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Wood-Tikchik State Park) stated that the State Park Management Council has not taken a stance on the Project but has submitted comments on the Proposed Study Plan. The study of this Project is a legislature directive and therefore the State Park is participating in the Project licensing process.

Mr. Michael Jackson (Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association) asked if there have been any surveys of the public to determine whether the public is in favor of the Project and the status of the Cooperative's public outreach. Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) responded that the Cooperative's mission statement includes a directive to continually evaluate opportunities that are advantageous to the membership. Ms. Sue Flensburg (Nushagak Cooperative Board of Directors) stated that there's a need for an alternative to diesel fuel in the region and the cost of living is high. A 30-year search for alternative energy sources was conducted and nothing else was identified that would provide adequate energy for the region. Nuclear and tidal projects, among other options, were considered during the search. Ms. Annie Fritze (Nushagak Cooperative Board of Directors) added that the Nushagak Cooperative Board of Directors has traveled to villages to discuss the Project and energy alternatives with them. Mr. Chaney stated that over 100 meetings to discuss the Project have been conducted in the region. Most other alternatives (such as solar) don't have the reliability to replace diesel fuel generation. The transmission line will provide the opportunity to add other renewable energy resources such as wind to the regional system. The State Park directive from the 1960s identified two hydropower projects, but neither was deemed feasible. Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) added that there will be more regular meetings and engagements as the process goes along now that the Project is out of the formal abeyance and COVID-19 is less of a concern.

Mr. Charlie Johnson (Community Member) asked how much of a loss there will be to sockeye and king salmon. Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) responded that the studies will evaluate many fish species, including sockeye and king salmon. Mr. Johnson also asked about plans to construct an access road to the site. Mr. Chaney added that there will not be an access road to the Project and it will be a fly-in facility.

Council elder (Caller 05) stated that they were against the proposed Project. They stated that they live off the land and speak for the people of the Bristol Bay region.

Mr. Mischa Ellanna (Bristol Bay Native Corporation) asked for an explanation of Figure 4-4 in the Proposed Study Plan. Mr. Charles Sauvageau (McMillen Jacobs Associates) and Mr. Kevin Jensen (McMillen Jacobs Associates) provided an explanation of potential instream in the bypass reach and what volume of water might be used for power generation. The graph as shown is an approximation and further iterations will be informed by the studies conducted during Project licensing. Mr. Ellanna added that diverting water would alter hydraulics of water through the

falls. Mr. Jensen responded that as part of Project studies, a 2D model will be developed that will address the changes to hydraulics in the bypass reach.

Ms. Ali Eskelin (Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Wood-Tikchik State Park) asked if there is a mechanism in the Integrated Licensing Process (ILP) to extend the licensing process if additional studies or data needs are identified. Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) responded that there is a mechanism to extend the study portion of the licensing process to gather additional data needed to inform FERC’s environmental assessment.

Mr. Cory Warnock (McMillen Jacobs Associates) concluded by saying that meetings will be more frequent during the next few years and the public will be kept informed and involved in the study program and licensing process. Mr. Will Chaney (Nushagak Cooperative) closed by stating that he sees an opportunity to collaborate with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and provide new and significant regional fisheries data. He thanked the meeting attendees for their time and participation.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30pm Alaska time.

Table 1. Nushagak River Hydroelectric Project Public Meeting Participants, June 8, 2022.

In-Person Meeting Participants			
Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Scott Schumacher	Royal Coachman Lodge	Ali Eskelin	Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Wood-Tikchik State Park
Fritz & Cindy Johnson	Community Members	Bryan Nass	Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute
Mickey Foster	Community Member	Rob Jordan	Alaska Renewable Energy Project
Kristina Andrew	Bristol Bay Native Assoc.	Noble Hendrix	QEDA Consulting
Lindsay Layland	Community Member	Dudley Reiser	Kleinschmidt Associates
Alannah Hurley	United Tribes of Bristol Bay	MaryLouise	Kleinschmidt Associates
Michael LaRussa	Fisherman	Thushara Gunda	Sandia National Laboratory
Michael Jackson	Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Assoc.	Andy Wink	Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Assoc.
Steve Carter	Community Member	Susan Flensburg	Nushagak Cooperative Board of Directors
Lee Borden	Alaska Department of Fish & Game	Henry Strub	Nushagak Cooperative Board of Directors
Jordan Head	Alaska Department of Fish & Game	Annie Fritze	Nushagak Cooperative Board of Directors
Phill Stacey	Alaska Department of Fish & Game	William Chaney	Nushagak Cooperative
Kevin Jensen	McMillen Jacobs Associates	Cory Warnock	McMillen Jacobs Associates
Chuck Sauvageau	McMillen Jacobs Associates	Laura Johnson	McMillen Jacobs Associates
Virtual Meeting Participants			
Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Alice Ruby	Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation	Shelby Burrige	Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Charlie Johnson	Community Member	Chance Wilcox	Community Member
Delores Larson	United Tribes of Bristol Bay	Monica (last name not provided)	Community Member
Matt Cutlip	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	Megan Condon	Native American Rights Fund
Betsy McCracken	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Ellamae Chaney	Community Member
Mischa Ellanna	Bristol Bay Native Corporation	Caller 03 (name not provided)	Unknown
Carol Mahara	Community Member	Caller 05 (name not provided)	Tribal Elder
Lisa Ilutsik	Community Member	Caller 06 (name not provided)	Unknown