

## Lee Vining, FERC Project No. 1388

### RECREATION AND LAND USE TWG 3 MEETING NOTES APRIL 1, 2021; 10 AM - 11 PM PDT

*\*These meeting notes are documentation of general discussions from the meeting held on the above-noted date. These notes are not a verbatim account of proceedings, are not meeting minutes, and do not represent any final decisions or official documentation for the project or participating agencies.*

#### 1. Attendees

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##### Relicensing Team Members

Carissa Shoemaker, ERM  
Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt  
Kelly Larimer, Kleinschmidt  
Matthew Harper, Kleinschmidt  
Matthew Woodhall, SCE  
Martin Ostendorf, SCE  
Shannon Luoma, Kleinschmidt

##### Agencies and Interested Stakeholders

Adam Barnett, USFS  
Bartshe Miller, Mono Lake Committee  
Monique Sanchez, USFS  
Sheila Irons, USFS  
Stephen Bowes, NPS

#### 2. Compiled Action Items

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- USFS will get the relicensing team their study requests as soon as possible, likely next week.

#### 3. Welcome, Introductions, Review of Notes and Other TWGs' Potential Studies

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- Matthew Woodhall provided a Safety moment
  - Introductions of team and participants via chat
  - Review of notes/comments from February
    - Comment: Adam Barnett, USFS
      - Study Plan requests from USFS are being submitted next week
  - Finlay Anderson listed the potential studies / study requests that are being discussed in the other resource TWGs

#### 4. Discussion of Resource Management Objectives / Potential Study Requests

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- The Relicensing Team discussed the study requests received from stakeholders and which aspects are being considered and which are aspects are being omitted.
    - **Creel Census**
    - **Road pullouts** – We see the road pullouts as more of a CalTrans issue, because they manage the roads and pullouts. There is a lack of project nexus so these are currently not part of our Recreation or Water Quality studies.

- **Trails/Access** – Requested by Tribal group, we are acknowledging the overlap between Recreation and Tribal.
- The Relicensing Team discussed the three currently proposed study plans: **Recreation Use Evaluation, Condition Assessment of Existing Facilities, and Project Boundary and Roads.**
- Comment: USFS
  - We are working on additional details for those three studies using your form. There are other things we'd like you to capture. Some of the use is outside of the currently defined project boundary but has a strong nexus, want to make sure those things aren't overlooked in analysis. We want to make sure that the Poole Powerhouse access road and access areas to recreation areas along the road are considered. Also include an assessment of use of project area when people come up from the campgrounds farther downstream on Lee Vining Creek; we would like a better understanding of if people using these downstream campgrounds are using the area in the project for recreation. We are putting these questions/concerns into a format for the relicensing team to use.
  - Response: Relicensing Team - These requests do seem to fall within our studies and seems like you may just be asking for us to expand the study area a bit.
- Comment: USFS
  - We are requesting one additional study for **Visual Quality**, using the scenic quality objectives that the USFS has for Lee Vining Canyon. There are requirements to ensure that the project is in compliance with the management plan. This request is being put together too.
  - Response: Relicensing Team – Requests for a visual study don't arise in every relicensing but it is not an unusual one. Please put it together into a request with nexus and methods so we can assess it. We do overlay USFS management plans onto our studies, so maybe that isn't actually a new study request.
  - Comment: Relicensing Team – Is the USFS thinking of looking at SCE or USFS facilities or both in the visual assessment?
  - Response: USFS – We want to look at impacts of development in general in the canyon, perhaps both USFS and SCE facilities.
  - Response: USFS – A visual study is needed because of the landscape scale of the resources – facilities that are in close proximity to the resource need to be integrated with the scenic goal of the area.
  - Comment: Relicensing Team – Does the USFS have a baseline visual study/assessment for the project area or Lee Vining Canyon?
  - Response: USFS – There may be one from the 2019 forest plan process. I will look.
- Comment: Mono Lake Committee
  - Considering **road pullouts**, whoever is responsible for them, they do cross between both CalTrans and SCE. The pullouts affect the project area, view shed and recreation experience, bathrooms, etc. The Recreation Use Study will probably cover it, but existing facilities clearly don't meet the needs of visitors (especially bathrooms). Point source pollution is still an issue. Dispersed camping and overnight parking are also being invited in these areas. The conditions/facilities of pullouts around the project area are

promoting incremental use. I'm thinking specifically of the Rhinedollar and Saddlebag pullout locations.

- Response: Relicensing Team – It seems like some of the elements of the pullout use concerns will be captured in our studies as they are now. However, we aren't looking to put in anything new. This is tricky because a lot of the use is from folks on the way to Yosemite NP, so the project isn't necessarily inducing the recreation, it's more the Sierra Nevadas bringing people in.
- Comment: USFS
  - Is it correct that you are only going to look at visitor use in developed areas?
  - Response: Relicensing Team – Yes, that's correct, that is our starting point. We are looking for guidance from stakeholders.
- Comment: USFS
  - Are you considering the USFS National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) surveys?
  - Response: Relicensing Team – Yes, we do want to incorporate those here and there is one occurring this year.
  - Comment: Relicensing Team - Do you know where in Lee Vining Canyon they are surveying? The NVUM survey may negate the need for us to do some of our study.
  - Response: Adam Barnett, USFS [response provided after meeting end] – The 2020-2021 NVUM sampling plan for the Inyo includes these locations in Lee Vining Canyon/Saddlebag area: Moraine CG – 3 days, Lower Lee Vining CG – 3 days, Saddlebag trailhead group CG – 1 day, Saddlebag day use – 1 day.
- Comment: Mono Lake Committee
  - SCE isn't responsible for the increase in travelers, but SCE is the custodian for this part of the forest where their project is. The project encourages visitors to stop along the way. People can't reasonably enjoy the area as they have in the past given the lacking existing facilities.
  - Comment: USFS – We hope that the NVUM surveys will help to determine WHY people are visiting. If they don't, we can try and capture that in our study requests.
  - Comment: Mono Lake Committee – People stop where there are pullouts, or any spaces off the road to park, those are invitations to recreate for dog walking, launching a kayak, taking photos, etc.
  - Response: Relicensing Team - People would be pulling off and looking at the scenery despite the hydro project. The lakes would be there without the project, they'd be smaller, but they would be there.
  - Comment: USFS – It seems like we are assuming a lot, that people are there not for the project. Assuming people are using the pullouts as an invitation. There are a lot of unknowns. We need to think about how to ask these questions. Unless there is a study that defends it, we need to take a deeper look. We can also come up with a recreation plan where we come back together at look at these needs every so often.
  - Comment: Relicensing Team - There is definitely a data gap around those questions. Proposed recreation use studies can be tailored to characterize this type of use and answer these specific questions. When will the NVUM be finished?

- Response: Adam Barnett, USFS – The NVUM survey ends in September 2021, so data will be available more like in January 2022.

## 5. Schedule & Next Steps

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- Our plan is to skip a TWG in April, so the next TWG would be the end of May
- Comment: Monique Sanchez, USFS
  - Are recreation studies only proposed in the spring/summer? We may not be capturing all of the project-induced recreation if we only focus on one time of year.
  - Response: Relicensing Team – A schedule for proposed studies would be tailored to the recreation season(s) at this location, understanding that recreation use changes based on the season (spring/summer compared to winter). All recreation at the project will be characterized, though the schedule of data collection at certain times of year will be based on filling data gaps and stakeholder interest.
- USFS is still working on study requests.

## 6. Upcoming TWG Meetings

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Aquatics 4	May 24, 2021 9:30am
Terrestrial 4	May 26, 2021 10am
Cultural and Tribal 4	May 26, 2021 1:30pm
<b>Recreation and Land Use 4</b>	<b>May 27, 2021 10am</b>