

INITIAL STUDY REPORT MEETING

April 26, 2018

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

1. Review FERC licensing process
2. Discuss the study results
3. Discuss any proposals to modify the study plan

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Purpose of the Meeting
- Relicensing Overview
 - Process
 - Schedule
 - Second Year Studies
- Study Reports
 - 2017 Baseline Fisheries Survey
 - Lake Sturgeon Survey
 - Friberg Bypassed Reach Instream Flow Study
 - Hoot Diversion Reach Instream Flow Study
- Lunch
- Study Reports
 - Fish Passage Feasibility Study
 - Wildlife Resource Survey
 - Botanical Resource Survey
 - Recreational Use and Facility Inventory Study
 - Cultural Resources Survey
- Modifications to the Study Plan
- Recap and Next Steps

RELICENSING PROCESS

License Application (2019)

Studies (2017-2018)

Scoping (2016-2017)

SCHEDULE

- Otter Tail files Initial Study Report Meeting Summary (5/14/2018)
- Stakeholders submit any disputes or requests to amend the study plan (6/13/2018)
- Stakeholders submit responses to any disputes or amendment requests (7/13/2018)
- FERC issues the Director's Determination on disputes or amendments (8/12/2018)
- Otter Tail conducts second year studies (2018-2019)
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SECOND YEAR STUDIES

STUDY	STATUS
Desktop Fish Entrainment Study	Otter Tail has begun work on this study.
Lake Sturgeon Survey	Spring sampling is scheduled in May 2018. Otter Tail plans to collect pectoral fin samples in the spring of 2018, if requested by MNDNR or USFWS.
Mussel Survey	The field effort is scheduled for July 1, 2018.

AQUATIC STUDIES

TERRESTRIAL STUDIES

WILDLIFE AND BOTANICAL SURVEYS



WILDLIFE AND BOTANICAL SURVEYS

- Work conducted by HDR, Inc
- Reconnaissance level field surveys of wildlife and botanical resources and habitat in the Otter Tail River Project area including rare, threatened or endangered (RTE) species, unique habitat, and non-native invasive botanical species.
- Assess the effects of the continued operation and maintenance of the project on these resources

WILDLIFE AND BOTANICAL SURVEYS

- Desktop review of existing data
- Conducted in-field surveys August 22 and 28
- Findings
 - No RTE botanical species were observed
 - Giant reed grass (*Phragmites australis*), an invasive species, was observed at the northeast end of the Central/Pisgah Study area
 - Migrating white pelicans and Franklin's gulls (state special concern species) observed within the Friberg and Central/Pisgah Dam Study Areas
 - An adult bald eagle was observed at the Hoot Lake Dam Study Area
 - Suitable roost habitat for Northern Long-Eared Bat occurs at all five study areas

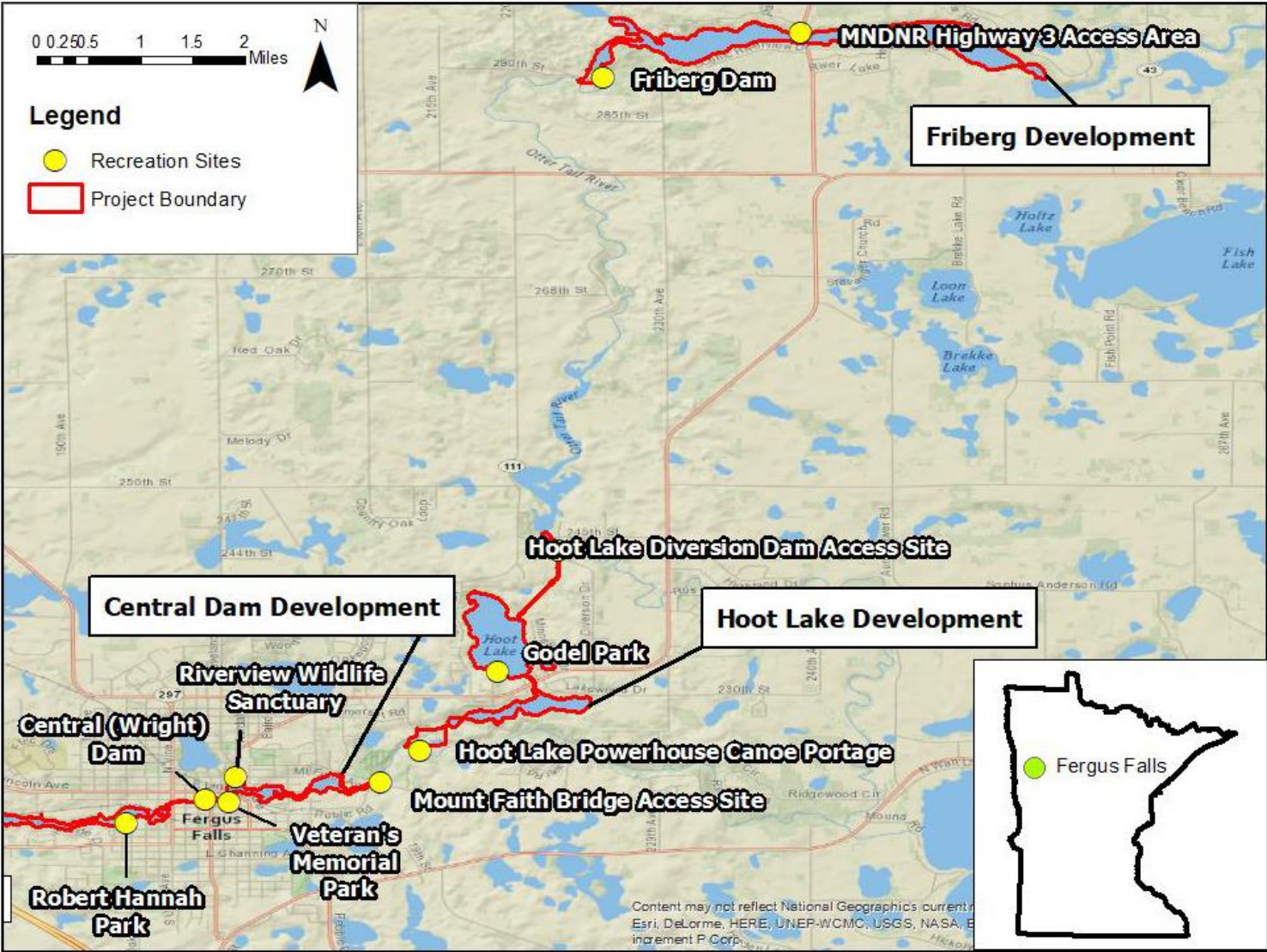
RECREATIONAL USE AND FACILITY INVENTORY STUDY



RECREATIONAL USE AND FACILITY INVENTORY STUDY

- Conducted by Louis Berger
- Study Objectives
 - Develop an inventory of and map existing public recreation sites and access areas
 - Identify who owns, operates, and maintains each recreation site
 - Evaluate the condition of the recreation sites and facilities
 - Identify and photograph any areas that have characteristics of erosion, slumping, or other forms of instability
 - Estimate current recreation use and the current and projected use capacity at each project recreation site
 - Conduct visitor surveys to determine user perceptions of the operation and management of the facilities, to evaluate the adequacy of project recreation facilities, and to identify if any changes or upgrades to the sites are needed to meet current or future recreation needs and demand

RECREATIONAL USE AND FACILITY INVENTORY STUDY



RECREATIONAL USE AND FACILITY INVENTORY STUDY

- The 13 sites surveyed included boat launches, carry-in access, portages, fishing piers, shoreline access for anglers, picnic sites, and urban walkways over dams. **The sites generally receive low use** with majority of activity occurring during special event weekends
- **Bank fishing** and **boat fishing** are the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the area. **Dayton Hollow Dam Access Area** received the highest number of bank fishermen, and **Godel Park** was the most popular site for boat fishermen.
- Other notable activities observed at the sites were swimming, kayaking, power boating, using personal watercraft (PWC), and walking.
- **Utilization of recreation site parking is well below capacity.** Over the course of the study, average capacity utilization did not exceed 9 percent at any site. Event weekends have the highest utilization across all sites, followed by holiday weekends. Despite the spike in usage during these times, utilization did not exceed 40 percent at any of the sites.
- **Dayton Hollow Dam Access Area** had the highest capacity utilization (8.8 percent) based on the average number of vehicles observed and available parking spaces. **Pisgah Dam** had the lowest capacity utilization (0.4 percent).

RECREATIONAL USE AND FACILITY INVENTORY STUDY

- **Godel Park** has the highest average number of vehicles observed, while **Pisgah Dam** has the lowest number of vehicles observed.
- Visitors are **primarily local residents**, with about 69 percent coming from the local Fergus Falls zip code.
- **The sites are generally in good condition**, with an average condition rating of 4.2 on a 5-point scale.
- Recreation survey respondents are **generally satisfied with the number of available amenities at the recreation sites**, reporting an average satisfactory rating of 4 on a 5-point scale.
- Based on interview responses, **restrooms are the most requested amenity** across the 13 sites.
- The estimated visitor use for the recreation season across all sites is 5,373 recreation days. Godel Park had the highest number of recreation days (1,496) while Hoot Lake Powerhouse Canoe Portage had the lowest number of recreation days (seven).
- Future demand for recreation at study sites is a function of changes in population demographics and rates of participation in outdoor activities. As the rate of population growth slows across Minnesota, the over-65 age group is expected to increase, and, with it, a change in recreation participation is expected. An increase in passive recreation activities, such as bank fishing, boat fishing (non-motorized and motorized), walking, and sightseeing, is expected while participation in active recreation activities, such as waterskiing, swimming, and using PWC, is expected to decrease.

CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEYS



CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEYS

- Conducted by Stantec
- Filed as “Privileged” to protect cultural resources
- Copies of reports distributed to Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) of participating tribes
- Stantec conducted two surveys:
 - Phase I Architectural Survey
 - Phase I Archaeological Survey

PHASE I ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

- Conducted an architectural survey to evaluate the integrity of the reservoirs associated with four of Otter Tail's hydroelectric plants
- Recommended that the reservoirs associated with each of the four dams and hydroelectric plants are contributing to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible resources as the reservoirs maintain integrity of setting, feeling, association, and location
- As Otter Tail is not proposing any actions which would compromise the integrity of the NRHP-eligible dams and hydroelectric plants, recommended that the NRHP-listed, eligible, and contributing resources within or adjacent to the APE will not be adversely effected by the proposed project
- No further architectural survey work is recommended

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

- Provided definitive information on the presence and type of cultural resources located within the project Area of Project Effect (APE) and to assess the potential for further investigation of any identified sites
- No new archaeological sites were identified during the Phase I survey
- The proposed FERC relicensing is expected to have No Effect to Historic Properties

MODIFICATIONS TO THE STUDY PLAN

CRITERIA FOR MODIFICATION OF APPROVED STUDY PLAN

- Any proposal to modify an ongoing study must be accompanied by a showing of good cause why the proposal should be approved, and must include, as appropriate to the facts of the case, a demonstration that:
 1. Approved studies were not conducted as provided for in the approved study plan; or
 2. The study was conducted under anomalous environmental conditions or that environmental conditions have changed in a material way.

18 CFR §5.15(d)

CRITERIA FOR NEW STUDY

- Any proposal for new information gathering or studies . . . must be accompanied by a showing of good cause why the proposal should be approved, and must include . . . a statement explaining:

1. Any material changes in the law or regulations applicable to the information request;
2. Why the goals and objectives of any approved study could not be met with the approved study methodology;
3. Why the request was not made earlier;
4. Significant changes in the project proposal or that significant new information material to the study objectives has become available; and
5. Why the new study request satisfies the study criteria in § 5.9(b)

18 CFR §5.15(e)

1. Describe the goals and objectives of each study proposal and the information to be obtained;
2. Explain the relevant resource management goals of the agencies or Indian tribes with jurisdiction over the resource to be studied;
3. If the requester is not a resource agency, explain any relevant public interest considerations in regard to the proposed study;
4. Describe existing information concerning the subject of the study proposal, and the need for additional information;
5. Explain any nexus between project operations and effects (direct, indirect, and/or cumulative) on the resource to be studied, and how the study results would inform the development of license requirements;
6. Explain how any proposed study methodology . . . is consistent with generally accepted practice in the scientific community or, as appropriate, considers relevant tribal values and knowledge; and
7. Describe considerations of level of effort and cost . . . and why any proposed alternative studies would not be sufficient to meet the stated information needs.

18 CFR §5.9(b)

RECAP AND NEXT STEPS

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