

MEETING NOTES
Stevens Creek Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2353)

Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc.
Joint RCG Meeting

February 18, 2020

Final KMK 3-25-20

ATTENDEES:

Amy Bresnahan (DESC)	Elizabeth Miller (SCDNR)
Ray Ammarell (DESC)	Jason Bettinger (SCDNR)
Caleb Gaston (DESC)	Morgan Kern (SCDNR)
Randy Mahan (DESC)	Melanie Olds (USFWS) via conf. call
Alison Jakupca (Kleinschmidt)	Martha Zapata (USFWS) via conf. call
Kelly Kirven (Kleinschmidt)	Scott Glassmeyer (USFWS) via conf. call
Henry Mealing (Kleinschmidt)	Derrick Miller (USFS)
Jason Moak (Kleinschmidt)	Keith Whalen (USFS)
Jordan Johnson (Kleinschmidt)	Andy Herndon (NMFS) via conf. call
Jay Payne (GWRD)	Twyla Cheatwood (NMFS) via conf. call
Jeffrey Williams (GEPD)	Rachel Freeman (SRK)
Cameron Henderson (SCDHEC)	Tony Hicks (individual)

These notes are a summary of the major points presented during the meeting and are not intended to be a transcript or analysis of the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the revised Water Quality Study Plan, draft Mussel Study Plan, Draft Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species Whitepaper, Aquatic Habitat Outline, and revised Recreation Study Plan. The draft documents discussed during the meeting are attached to the end of the notes. A summary of the discussion on each document is included below.

Revised Water Quality Study Plan

Alison provided a review of the revisions made to the Water Quality Study Plan stemming from discussion in the 11/13/2019 meeting.

- Two additional monitoring sites were added at the east end of the dam
- The study period was extended to last from January through December 2021
- Added continuous monitoring (15-minute intervals) for parameters including pH, conductivity, turbidity and monthly nutrient samples

Alison added that Kleinschmidt and DESC will go into the field prior to the start of the study to scope out the best locations for monitor installation. Jason M. said that since the reservoir fluctuates, the monitors will be attached to buoys and will be located at least 1 meter below the water surface, or mid-depth if possible. Sites will be recorded by GPS once selected.

Amy added that the USGS does monthly profiles and collects DO, temperature, pH and specific conductivity. This information will continue to be collected during the study season.

Jason B. asked if an additional site could be added in the Savannah River portion of the Stevens Creek reservoir, specifically in an area where the powerline crosses the reservoir. This area has a lot of vegetation and not much water flow. He would like to see DO and maybe pH collected during summer months for 24-48 hours on a twice-per-month or monthly basis (one sample in mid-June, 2 samples each in July and August spaced two weeks apart, and one sample in mid-October). This request will be considered and Kleinschmidt will confirm the location with Jason after the meeting.

Mussel Study Plan

A strawman for the Mussel Study Plan was distributed prior to the meeting. USFWS identified a general area that they would like to see mussel surveys completed. This area starts at the upstream extent of the Stevens Creek arm of the Project reservoir down to the Stevens Creek confluence with Horn Creek. USFWS believes this area may have the highest potential for mussels within the Project boundary. Keith said the Forest Service contracted a malacologist to complete mussel surveys in the upper Horn Creek area. He will send that information over to Kleinschmidt and DESC. Morgan asked that the approximately 1.5 miles of Horn Creek that are within the Project boundary be added to the study area in the study plan. Keith also suggested adding to the study area portions of Dry Branch and Cheves Creek that occur in the Project boundary. He said that these areas could potentially be accessed through Forest Service roads. These areas will be checked for suitable habitat in the transition zones but may not be added to the study if such habitat does not exist in the Project boundary.

Morgan said that SCDNR generally conducts a qualitative assessment first to determine if any mussels are present in an area and then conducts a quantitative assessment within a defined boundary to determine relative abundance. Morgan will share any SCDNR standard methods used to collect data.

Melanie asked about the potential for mussels downstream of the Stevens Creek Dam and if a study in this area is necessary. Henry said this area received full river flow so it is pretty scoured and a majority of the water that flows through is cold hypolimnetic water released from Thurmond Dam. He said this may not be good habitat for mussels. In addition, this area is actually the headpond for the Augusta Diversion Project and is outside of the Project boundary so priority should be placed on studying the identified areas within the Project boundary.

Keith asked if any tributaries on the Georgia side of the Savannah River provide any habitat for mussels. Henry said there is likely a lower chance for mussels on the Georgia side of the Stevens Creek reservoir because there is more residential build-up in this area, which has significantly affected the tributaries.

Jason M. suggested adding several level loggers in various portions of the mussel study area, especially in areas where mussels are detected. He said this will provide information on project influence and potential backwatering in this area.

Alison said that the study plan strawman will be revised with a new map of the study area and sent back to stakeholders for additional review in the next few days. She requested that comments be submitted by mid-March.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered (RTE) Species Whitepaper

Alison explained that the whitepaper includes a list of federal, Forest Service, and state (Georgia and South Carolina) RTE species that occur in the Project vicinity. The federal and Forest Service species were analyzed to determine if their habitat exists within the Project boundary and potentially affected by continued Project operations. Currently, the state species that were provided by the SCDNR and GDNR are only listed in the report. However, the DNRs can request that any of these species that may have cultural significance be analyzed. Ultimately, FERC will make a determination on Project effects and ask for concurrence with the USFWS.

Elizabeth asked that the conservation status for state-listed species be added to the whitepaper (highest, high and moderate priority levels).

The group was in general agreement that the RTE Whitepaper will be beneficial for analyzing various species of concern. Alison asked that comments from the stakeholders be submitted by mid-March.

Aquatic Habitat Outline

Alison said that there was discussion of preparing an aquatic habitat whitepaper/study at the 11/13/2019 meeting. Over the next few years, data will be collected during a variety of studies that will help describe aquatic habitat (substrates, water quality, species distributions, etc.) in the Stevens Creek reservoir. The data collected in each proposed study will be rolled into a comprehensive report that will be filed with the Final License Application (FLA). Kleinschmidt and DESC have put together an outline for this report that will be filed with the Pre-Application Document (PAD). This outline will be filled in with data as it becomes available during relicensing.

The group reviewed the outline and suggested the following additions:

- Additional discussion on effects of fluctuation zones
- USACE Thurmond Dam operations
- Updated USACE Drought Contingency Plan
- Stevens Creek Project operations information
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas identified during relicensing

Henry said that this document should be helpful during Section 7 -RTE consultation and Section 18 - fish passage consultation as needed. Elizabeth asked if this document will be used to develop a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP). Alison said that an SMP isn't well-suited to this Project because DESC owns very little shoreline around the reservoir and USACE controls dock permitting. The recreation areas and Project operations lands will be described in the FLA, but there isn't a need for a separate SMP. In addition, DESC doesn't have the opportunity to establish a buffer zone around the reservoir since they don't own much land, however, this Aquatic Habitat whitepaper can help inform those that might have control over a buffer zone (i.e. USACE or Forest

Service). A land ownership map is also under development and will be shared with stakeholders when complete.

Recreation Study Plan

The revised Recreation Study Plan was distributed to stakeholders for review prior to the meeting. The use of trail cameras for activity monitoring at the Fury's Ferry and Chota Drive recreation sites was discussed at a previous meeting and added into the study plan. However, Derrick said that since that time, an incident was brought to the Forest Service's attention that caused the Service to be wary of trail camera use. Keith and Derrick said that they can find out if trail camera placement further down the access road may be possible. If trail cameras can't be used at these sites, spot counts will be conducted by two people throughout the study season.

Keith also noted that there was discussion of adding questions to the surveys regarding use at Fury's Ferry and Chota Drive, since surveys would not be conducted at these sites during the study. Kelly said that these questions would be added to the survey form.

Alison said that the next meeting would be conducted via conference call to discuss the updates to the PAD. Alison said that the official start of relicensing occurs when the Notice of Intent (NOI) and PAD are filed with FERC, which will occur around May 2020. At this time, DESC will also request the use of the Traditional Licensing Process (TLP). DESC requested that stakeholders send in letters to FERC supporting the use of the TLP. FERC will decide on the TLP request by June 2020. The Joint Agency Meeting (JAM) and site visit will occur around August 2020.

Action items from this meeting are listed below. Comments on the study plans/whitepapers are requested by March 17, 2020.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Kleinschmidt will revise the Water Quality Study Plan, Mussel Study Plan, RTE Whitepaper, Aquatic Habitat Outline and Recreation Study Plan and send back out to stakeholders for review.
- Morgan will send information on SCDNR standard measures and procedures for mussel surveys.
- Keith will send information on Forest Service mussel studies near Horn Creek.
- Derrick will explore the Forest Service's position on using trail cameras on FS properties.