

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

Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc.
Joint RCG Meeting

September 15, 2020

Final KMK 10-12-20

ATTENDEES:

Amy Bresnahan (DESC)	Elizabeth Miller (SCDNR)
Ray Ammarell (DESC)	Jason Bettinger (SCDNR)
Caleb Gaston (DESC)	Morgan Kern (SCDNR)
Alison Jakupca (Kleinschmidt)	Mark Scott (SCDNR)
Kelly Kirven (Kleinschmidt)	Melanie Olds (USFWS)
Henry Mealing (Kleinschmidt)	Keith Whalen (USFS)
Jason Moak (Kleinschmidt)	Twyla Cheatwood (NMFS)
Bret Hoffman (Kleinschmidt)	Frank Carl (SRK)
Paula Marcinek (GDNR – WRD)	Dave Mewborn (SRK)
Steve Schleiger (GDNR – WRD)	Frank Holleman (Naturaland Trust)
Rusty Wenerick (SCDHEC)	

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 changes to the Mussel Study Plan, Recreation Study Plan survey form, and Water Quality Study Plan. Discussion on each study plan is summarized below. The revised documents from the meeting are attached to these notes.

Mussel Study Plan

Alison noted that there is a significant amount of existing mussel data in the Project vicinity, outside of the Project boundary. The study plan focuses on the collection of mussel data in specific areas within the Project boundary. Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) requested the study area to be expanded to include portions of Uchee Creek and Little Kiokee Creek. The geographic scope in the study plan was modified to include these areas.

Frank Holleman indicated that the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) surveyed a stretch of Stevens Creek downstream of Highway 283, outside of the Project boundary. He said there was a large mussel presence in that area, although no Carolina heelsplitters were found. He will try to obtain the data from USFWS and share with the group. Frank also noted that Clemson University conducted a survey in the same stretch of Stevens Creek for Rocky Shoals Spider Lily populations. He will share that information as well.

Alison reviewed the other mussel study plan edits. Morgan asked to change the study plan timeframe to exclude the month of October. She said that leaf litter can start to inhibit visual

surveys in the fall. Keith agreed and said that the Forest Service typically conducts mussel surveys between March 1 and September 30. Alison edited the study plan to reflect this request.

Recreation Study Plan

Kelly reviewed the edits made to the Recreation Study Plan survey form. She noted that GADNR indicated they are interested in a canoe portage at Stevens Creek dam. A question was added to the survey form to solicit feedback on public interest in a canoe portage. GADNR made additional edits to the survey form, including adding a question regarding the addition of recreation facilities and boating access provisions directly downstream of the dam. Kelly noted that the Augusta Project begins immediately downstream of Stevens Creek dam, so DESC is hesitant to collect any recreation data regarding downstream recreation. Paula said that GADNR is interested in a canoe portage and a tailwater fishing area on the Georgia side of Stevens Creek dam. Amy said that she remembers provisions for a tailwater fishing pier in the past that was never constructed. She will research the FERC record to find out why the pier was never built. Stallings Island is located just downstream of the dam and adding formal recreation facilities could attract the public to the area, putting the protection of the cultural resource at risk. Paula said that a fishing pier will not provide access to the river and should not affect Stallings Island.

The group discussed the possibility of a canoe portage at the dam. The Georgia side of the dam presents issues since this is where the Project powerhouse and other Project facilities are located. In addition, there is a large substation located in this area. Safety would be a concern on the Georgia side. On the South Carolina side of the dam, the terrain is very steep and rocky, making passage difficult. Elizabeth asked if land clearing/earth moving activities and the addition of gravel would make the area more accessible. Ray said that it would take a lot of work and would be difficult to get equipment in the area. Alison suggested the Recreation RCG hold a site visit in the area to view both sides of the dam and get a better idea of how a canoe portage might be achieved. Additional representatives from GADNR and SCDNR boating access crews may attend the site visit. Alison said we will plan to conduct the site visit in the spring of 2021.

Paula noted that approximately 10 percent of the population in the Augusta area is Hispanic and suggested translating the survey form into Spanish for those individuals. Kelly said that this can be done, although it is not likely the field clerks administering the surveys will be able to speak Spanish. The Spanish surveys will be provided upon request and filled out directly by the survey respondent.

Jason B. said that many boaters access the Stevens Creek Reservoir using the two boat ramps in the Thurmond Dam tailrace, which are located outside of the Project boundary. These boat ramps are not included in the recreation study. He suggested contacting the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to see if they collect use data at these boat ramps. This data will provide a more complete picture of use at the Stevens Creek Reservoir. Kelly said she will contact USACE and any data they have will be incorporated into the Recreation study report.

Henry noted that the recreation study methods, including survey forms, may be modified as the study progresses to address needs or issues that arise. Kelly said that if issues or additional data needs become apparent, she will consult with the Recreation RCG prior to modifying study methods.

Water Quality Study Plan

Alison said that GADNR requested nutrient sampling be conducted at all water quality collection sites, rather than the limited sampling that was originally proposed. DESC agreed to add nutrient sampling at all six sites.

Jason noted that Site 5 which was originally planned to be located at the bridge at Woodlawn Road will be moved a short distance downstream. Since the bridge does not have pilings to which the water quality monitor could be attached, keeping the monitor in that area would require use of a buoy and almost certain loss of the monitor during the study. Instead, Jason said that a homeowner downstream of the Woodlawn bridge will allow the monitor to be attached to his dock, providing protection to the monitor and discouraging vandalism.

Other Discussion

Elizabeth said that she asked Mark Scott to join the meeting to discuss a potential Redeye Bass study. Mark said that the Redeye Bass, also known as Bartram's Bass or Bartram's Redeye Bass, is known to occur in the upper Savannah River, including Stevens Creek and other tributaries located on the Georgia side of the Savannah River. The species is listed as having highest priority conservation status in both the South Carolina and Georgia State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP). The Alabama Bass has been invading the area over the last few decades and hybridizing with the Redeye Bass. The endemic species generally inhabits the area from Augusta Shoals to the Blue Ridge, or the Piedmont Region. Since agencies have a high conservation concern for the species, more information on the species in the Stevens Creek Reservoir would be a great value. Henry asked Mark what type of study he would like to see. Mark said that backpack shocking in the general areas where the mussel surveys will be conducted would work. DNA would need to be collected on the fish to ensure positive identification. Mark will submit a written request to the Water Quality, Fish and Wildlife RCG for consideration.

Action items from this meeting are listed below.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Kleinschmidt will send out the revised study plans for additional review/RCG approval.
- Frank H. will provide Naturaland Trust's mussel and Rocky Shoals Spider Lily data.
- Mark will develop a written request for Redeye Bass study for WQFW RCG consideration.