

RECREATION

Stage 3 of the Site C Clean Energy Project (Site C) is the environmental and regulatory review phase. As part of an environmental assessment of Site C, BC Hydro will identify and assess potential project effects — environmental, economic, social, heritage and health — and opportunities to provide lasting benefits for the region and First Nations. Where effects cannot be avoided, BC Hydro will identify and evaluate options for mitigation.

This study update provides an overview of work completed to date and currently underway and is current as of fall 2011. Studies may be changed or revised in scope or timing on the basis of input from regulators, government agencies, First Nations, stakeholders and the public as part of the pre-application stage of the environmental assessment process.

The Site C project requires environmental certification and other regulatory permits and approvals before it can proceed to construction. In addition, the Crown has a duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Aboriginal groups.

DEFINITION

The Peace River is currently used by residents and tourists for recreation. Subject to environmental certification and other approvals and permits, the proposed Site C project would create a reservoir 83 kilometres long and, on average, two to three times the width of the current river. As a result, reservoir-based activities would replace river-based recreation upstream of the dam, and new recreation opportunities could be created.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the recreation study is to identify the potential effects of the project on recreation and navigable use, identify relevant mitigation measures, understand related public safety considerations, and to identify opportunities for recreation on the reservoir.

STATUS OF STUDIES

Stage 2 Studies

During Stage 2 studies were undertaken to create a baseline of information about recreation use in the Peace River and nearby areas, such as the Pine River.

- **Angler and River-Based Recreation Use Survey**

In 2008/2009 BC Hydro conducted a two year angler (creel) and river-based recreation use survey along the Peace River and major tributaries between Peace Canyon Dam and the B.C./Alberta border to develop an understanding of current recreation uses and levels. This study included shore-based interviews at boat landing or fishing sites, with anglers and

recreational users, and additional analysis to estimate total angler effort and catch within the study area.

The recreation survey documented nine formal and 25 informal recreation sites between the Peace Canyon Dam and the B.C./Alberta border. The most common recreation activities indicated were fishing, boating, camping and shoreline leisure (from May to September), with a shift to hunting in October, and low recreational use in winter.

Key tourism features of the region include tourist amenities and services (lodging, restaurants), transportation infrastructure (highways and airports) and the scenic corridors throughout the area. In addition, a number of tour operators and guides offer a range of services to visitors to experience outdoor recreation in the region. Other visitor focused amenities throughout the region include parks and campgrounds, museums and historical interpretive exhibits, and visitor centres such as the W.A.C Bennett Dam.

Consultation

Recreation was a public consultation topic during Stage 2 in May/June 2008. Participants were asked four specific questions on reservoir recreation and given the opportunity to raise any additional points in the open-ended comment sections.

- When asked which factors should be considered when evaluating potential reservoir recreation, participants were most likely to select: provide minimal impacts to the environment (63 per cent); designate new parks and protected areas (60 per cent); provide a range of facilities and services for recreation (45 per cent) and support new types of recreation activities (40 per cent).
- When asked about the likelihood of using the reservoir for specific recreational activities, participants were “very” or “somewhat” likely to use the reservoir for: day use (56 per cent), camping (55 per cent), hiking (47 per cent), fishing (45 per cent), boating - motorized (39 per cent) or non-motorized (34 per cent) and hunting (26 per cent).
- When asked whether they would prefer to establish a network of roads to provide easy recreational access to the reservoir or to have people access the reservoir by boat or on foot, just over half of participants (54 per cent) would prefer to see a network of roads providing easy recreational access while just under half (46 per cent) would prefer to keep the reservoir accessible primarily by boat, existing roads, or on foot.
- When asked about their likelihood of using the reservoir for recreational purposes if there was public access, almost six in 10 (58 per cent) participants said they would be at least somewhat likely to use the reservoir for recreational purposes if there was public access.

During Stage 3, consultation results will be considered, along with financial and technical input, as the Site C project continues its recreation studies and refines project plans.

Stage 3 Work

Recreation Management Plan

As part of Stage 3, BC Hydro will develop a Recreation Management Plan that will consider project effects on existing recreation sites, recreation use and access, and will include an assessment of potential impacts on public use during project construction and operations phases, relevant mitigation measures, and identify opportunities for recreation on the reservoir.

The Recreational Management Plan will include evaluation of recreation options with consideration of public safety, location, access, environmental site conditions, engineering feasibility and design, maintenance and cost.

Socio-economic data gathering initiated in Stage 2 will continue, including recreation data to support analysis of recreation use in the region.

BC Hydro is committed to identifying and establishing recreational opportunities on the Site C reservoir and will work with local communities to identify opportunities to support recreational use.

Public Safety Management Plan

A key objective for BC Hydro is to manage public safety alongside public access and recreational use at all of its facilities. Public Safety Management Plans are developed for all of BC Hydro's facilities to identify potential hazards and risks to the public associated with its operations and safe-use areas. Options for recreation opportunities for Site C would be considered within the overall Site C Public Safety Management Plan.

Depending on the identified public safety risks, a range of measures may be used to manage for recreation use and public safety. These may range from unrestricted access (with public education and signage) to full restrictions with physical barriers in high risk areas (e.g., close to the Site C dam and Peace Canyon dam).

BC Hydro will consult with local governments, property owners, stakeholders and the public about recreation as the project proceeds through environmental assessment. Specifically, consultation participants will be asked for specific feedback, and given the opportunity to provide any additional comments on a Recreation Management Plan.

Stage 3 Consultation

The Site C project requires environmental certification and other regulatory permits and approvals before it can proceed to construction. The Stage 3 environmental and regulatory review process will include opportunities for consultation and input by the public, Aboriginal groups, communities, property owners and stakeholders.

In addition to the consultation opportunities led by the environmental regulatory agencies within the environmental assessment process, BC Hydro will lead several streams of public and stakeholder consultation during Stage 3:

- Regional and Local Government Liaison

- Property Owner Liaison
- Local Area Consultation
- Preliminary Design Consultation

BC Hydro and Aboriginal groups are also engaged in a thorough consultation process that will continue through all stages of the project.

How Input Will Be Used

A Consultation Summary Report will be prepared and released on the project website following each consultation period and Consideration Memos will be prepared, indicating how input has been considered, along with technical and financial information, for use in project designs or plans, including engineering and environmental mitigation plans.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The following information can be found at www.bchydro.com/sitec:

1. Field Studies Notices – Monthly updates on field studies.
2. Project Description Report. May 2011. (page 83).
3. Peace River Site C Angling and Recreation-Use Creel Survey 2008-2009 Final Report. 2010.
4. Stage 2 Report: Consultation and Technical Review. 2009. (page 90).
5. Peace River Angling and Recreational – Use Creel Survey 2008 – Interim Year 1 Report. 2009.
6. Project Definition Consultation Discussion Guide and Feedback Form Round 2. October/November 2008. (pages 32-33).
7. Project Definition Consultation Round 1 Summary Report. September 2008. (pages 29-43).
8. Monthly Angling and River-Based Recreation Use Survey Information Sheet, May 2008.
9. Site C Feasibility Review: Stage 1 Completion Report. 2007. (page 51).

INQUIRIES

Updates on field studies are available at www.bchydro.com/sitec and in the Community Consultation offices in Fort St. John and Hudson's Hope.

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