



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for the

Big Hole River Diversion Dam

in

Silver Bow and Beaverhead Counties, Montana

APPENDIX K

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS AND SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public Meeting

Proposed Replacement of Big Hole River Diversion Dam

The City and County of Butte-Silver Bow (BSB) invites you to attend a public meeting regarding the proposal to replace the existing Big Hole Diversion Dam. The meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, August 26th, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers located in the Courthouse in Butte, Montana.**

The proposed project is located in Silver Bow County near Divide, Montana. The existing diversion dam and intake structure is owned and managed by BSB and is used to divert water from the Big Hole River, which is then treated and pumped to storage and distribution systems in Butte, Montana. BSB has initiated an Environmental Assessment (EA) to study potential impacts that may result from the proposed project.

The purpose of the meeting is to present the proposed Purpose and Need, Project Goals, and Preliminary Alternatives to the public and gather public input. Community participation is a very important part of the process and the public is encouraged to attend. Comments may be submitted in writing at the meeting or by mail to project consultant Dick Talley of DOWL HKM at P.O. Box 3588, Butte, MT 59702 or by email at dick.talley@hkminc.com. Please indicate comments are for the Big Hole River Diversion Dam project and submit comments by **September 28th, 2009.**

**6:00 p.m.
August 26th, 2009
Council Chambers
Courthouse
Butte, Montana**

Summary of Public Meeting #1 August 27, 2009

An initial public information meeting was conducted for the proposed Big Hole River Diversion Dam project on August 27, 2009. The meeting was held in the Silver Bow County Courthouse Council Chambers and took place from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Approximately 20 people attended the meeting. The meeting format included a formal presentation followed by a question and answer period. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Purpose and Need and goals of the project as well as preliminary project alternatives. Following the formal presentation, members of the public commented on a number of aspects of the project including habitat impacts and mitigation; regulatory agency involvement; icing, sediment and debris problems; project costs; vandalism and safety concerns; historic preservation; permitting concerns; and technical questions regarding design of each of the alternatives. Comments and responses are summarized below. It should be noted that the meeting was not recorded. This summary is intended only to capture the general content of meeting discussions and is not a transcript of the meeting.

Q: Will there be mitigation for habitat impacts?

A: A Biological Resource Report is being prepared for this project, which will identify anticipated project impacts under each of the proposed alternatives. Project impacts will be minimized to the extent possible; unavoidable impacts will be mitigated as appropriate in coordination with appropriate regulatory agencies.

Q: Has the project team engaged FWP in this process?

A: A formal scoping letter was sent to FWP in July 2009 requesting their involvement in this project. Additionally, the project team has scheduled an Agency Coordination Meeting on September 1, 2009. FWP and other agencies with potential interest in this project have been invited to attend this meeting. The project team is actively engaging regulatory agencies early in the process in order to identify and address agency concerns before the permitting phase.

Q: The project team should consider the alternatives on an equal basis.

A: A number of factors will be considered in the alternatives screening process, including the function and reliability of the system, boat and fish passage opportunities, anticipated impacts to the natural and built environment, safety at the site, maintenance requirements, and estimated cost. All of the project alternatives will be assessed based on these screening criteria. The Preferred Alternative will be selected based on its ability to best meet the goals and objectives for the project.

Q: Would there be icing problems with Alternative 5?

A: The design of the existing diversion dam essentially stops water from moving as it reaches the dam crest; ice naturally forms at this point during winter months. Proposed project alternatives are designed to reduce icing problems at the site by keeping water moving during the coldest months of the year.

Q: How are sediment problems being addressed?

A: Proposed project alternatives are designed to allow sediment flushing and reduce sediment buildup behind the dam structure.

Q: How are trees/debris addressed in the design of preliminary alternatives?

A: Under each of the proposed alternatives, a debris boom will collect surface debris. Additionally, during periods of high flow, Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 are designed such that large debris would overtop the rock weir structures.

Q: How will cost factor into this project?

A: The project team is developing cost estimates for each of the proposed alternatives. Cost-effectiveness will be one of the factors used to screen alternatives.

Q: Under Alternative 4A, why is there a need for the rock drops?

A: Currently, there is a sharp vertical drop immediately downstream of the existing diversion dam crest, which results in a safety hazard for recreational users. The rock drop structures are intended to gradually lose elevation downstream, providing safe boater passage through this stretch. The gradual drops would also improve fish passage by providing rest pools and gradual elevation changes.

Q: Under Alternative 4A, how will the secondary intake operate?

A: The secondary intake serves as an emergency backup in case of failure or if the primary intake needs to be taken offline for repairs or maintenance. The secondary intake is normally valved out and only would be valved into the system when the primary intake is nonoperational.

Q: Is it possible to design a hybrid option of 4A and 4B?

A: The project alternatives presented this evening are preliminary in nature. The project team will continue to refine the design of these alternatives in order to best meet the project objectives. As part of continued design efforts, the project team may consider a hybrid alternative.

Q: Why is it necessary to move upriver?

A: Bedrock conditions were encountered during original pump installation, preventing the pumps from being installed at the proper elevations. As a result, pump cavitation currently occurs more frequently than desired. By moving upriver, the design would take advantage of the natural gradient of the river and would gain elevation needed to prevent pump cavitation.

Q: Under Alternative 4B, would the nearby house be impacted?

A: No, none of the alternatives would impact any of the buildings near the project site, with the exception of the pump house.

Q: FWP should be involved early in the process.

A: The project team agrees with this recommended approach; we will continue to engage FWP and other regulatory agencies throughout the process.

Q: Will the new facility require additional personnel?

A: Butte-Silver Bow has requested a new facility that would involve reduced maintenance requirements. Additional personnel are not anticipated.

Q: How is the project team addressing the issue of vandalism?

A: The project team has attempted to minimize the use of features or elements that could be easily vandalized.

Q: How do the project alternatives affect safety at the site?

A: The design of the current facility is unsafe for maintenance personnel and for boaters. Under Alternatives 3, 4, and 5, it is anticipated that icing problems would be alleviated. Accordingly, maintenance personnel would no longer need to venture onto the ice to maintain system function in the winter. Additionally, the proposed rock drop structures would provide a gentle decrease in elevation thereby removing the “keeper” wave that exists immediately downstream of the current dam. By eliminating this keeper wave, safety for boaters will be improved as compared to the existing sharp vertical drop that currently exists.

Q: Do the Project Alternatives consider preservation?

A: The pump house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the existing diversion dam is considered a contributing element. A Historic Resources Report is being prepared for this project to identify all historic, cultural and archaeological features at the site and to assess potential project impacts. Project impacts will be minimized to the extent possible; unavoidable impacts will be mitigated as appropriate in coordination with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Q: What construction impacts will result from the project? Will boat passage be maintained during construction?

A: In order to minimize water quality impacts during construction, temporary bypass channels will be used to divert water around the construction area. During this period, boat passage will be temporarily interrupted.

Q: Will the project team conduct fish counts before and after construction activities?

A: No, fish counts will not be conducted for this project. Butte-Silver Bow has retained a team of professionals, including wildlife and fisheries biologists, to aid in project design, assess impacts to fisheries, and identify appropriate mitigation strategies.

Q: Will habitat degradation result from the project?

A: There will be some permanent impacts to riparian vegetation where new facilities are tied into the streambanks. Impacts to riparian vegetation will be mitigated to the extent practicable through re-seeding efforts. The project team anticipates that fisheries habitat will actually be enhanced as a result of the project due to improved access to spawning and rearing habitats.

Q: What is the permitting timeframe for this project?

A: A number of permits will be required from various state, federal, and local agencies. The project team anticipates that it will take approximately four to six months to obtain the appropriate permits.

Notice of Availability & Public Hearing

Environmental Assessment for Big Hole River Diversion Dam

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Big Hole River Diversion Dam project will soon be available for public review and comment. The Preferred Alternative identified in the EA includes elements that best satisfy the need for the project while minimizing impacts. The proposed action is the replacement of the existing diversion dam structure and intake facility. The proposed project would provide a reliable source of water for Butte, safety improvements for maintenance personnel and recreational users, and improved fish and boat passage.

Beginning on December 10, 2009, review the EA at:

- Butte Public Library (226 W. Broadway)
- Butte-Silver Bow Public Works Office (126 W. Granite)
- Online at http://www.hkminc.com/big_hole_river/index.htm (site active on 12/10/09)
- Email dick.talley@hkminc.com or call (406) 723-8213, ext. 409 for a copy

Comment Period: December 10, 2009 to January 15th, 2010

- Provide oral or written comments at the public hearing
- Submit written comments to Dick Talley, DOWL HKM, P.O. Box 3588, Butte, MT 59702
- Online at http://www.hkminc.com/big_hole_river/index.htm (site active on 12/10/09)

For More Information:

- Dick Talley, DOWL HKM, (406) 723-8213

PUBLIC HEARINGS

December 15, 2009, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Silver Bow County Courthouse, 155 W. Granite, Commission Room, 3rd Floor

December 16, 2009, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Grange Hall in Divide, Montana

Same presentation will be given on both evenings.