

Parr Hydroelectric Project Relicense – FERC No. 1894

Downstream Recreational Flow Focus Group Meeting Summary

December 11, 2014

Kleinschmidt Offices – Lexington, SC

Recreational Flow Focus Group - Purpose Statement

As part of the relicensing process for the Parr Hydroelectric Project, stakeholders identified that there is a need for information that characterizes the currently available recreational opportunities, access areas, and preferred recreational flows downstream of the Parr Shoals Dam, primarily as they relate to wade-angling, canoeing and kayaking. SCE&G proposes to obtain some of this information through the use of a Recreation Flow Focus Group. The information identified by the Focus Group will be used to help SCE&G identify the current patterns of non-motorized boating use on the Broad River, downstream of the Parr Shoals Dam for both location and amount of use, and the quality of those recreation activities. An additional objective of Focus Group meetings will be to identify preferred recreation flows and seasonal distribution associated with reasonable and safe recreational use for target activities in the Broad River downstream of the Parr Shoals Dam.

Session Details

Facilitators: Alison Jakupca, Henry Mealing, Kelly Miller - Kleinschmidt Associates

Date of Session: December 11, 2014

Participant Information:

<u>Organization/Affiliation</u>	<u>Number Attending</u>
• Individuals/Business owners/NGO members*	10
• State and Local Agencies (SCDNR, SCPRT, City of Columbia)	3
• SCE&G Personnel	2
• Kleinschmidt Personnel	3

*Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) represented include: Palmetto Paddlers, American Whitewater, and Congaree Riverkeeper.

Results:

In December 2014, SCE&G conducted a focus group of individuals who recreate on the Broad River, downstream of the Parr Shoals Dam, and who are knowledgeable regarding flow releases from the Parr Hydroelectric Project. For the purposes of this meeting summary, the Broad River, directly downstream of the Parr Shoals Dam and above the Columbia Diversion Dam, is referred to as the Area of Interest (AOI). Information was gathered in 3 primary areas: *(1) recreation use patterns, seasonal trends and distribution of activities; (2) preferred recreational flows and the seasonal distribution of those flows; (3) current downstream access areas, needs, and teaming/cooperation opportunities.* Discussion results are summarized below.

Recreation Use Patterns, Seasonal Trends and Distribution of Activities:

- Responses by focus group attendees on their frequency of recreation in the AOI varied depending on access and length of travel to the AOI. Individuals owning property along the Broad River indicated that they recreated below the Project on a weekly basis, while other attendees indicated that they have recreated in the AOI within the past year.
- The number of times that attendees recreated in the AOI in the past year varied from 4 to 10 times, to over 100 times.
- Focus group attendees indicated that they generally utilized the AOI during weekends and warmer seasonal temperatures. However, attendees indicated that the AOI was utilized by duck hunters and fishermen during colder seasons.
- Attendees also indicated that they take advantage of the paddling opportunities provided by the higher spring flows.
- Focus group attendees noted that recreation in the AOI has increased over the past 25 years.

Preferred Recreational Flows and the Seasonal Distribution of Flows

- Focus group attendees were queried regarding preferred recreation flows in the AOI and attendees noted that preferred flows varied by recreational activity. Attendees indicated that higher flows were generally preferred for paddling, while lower flows were generally preferred for fishing.
- Several attendees stated that 3.5 to 4 feet at the USGS Gage at Alston (approximately 1,500 feet³/second (cfs) to 2,300 cfs) is ideal for paddlers, boaters, and preferred by some fishermen. It was also noted that many fishermen prefer low flows and clear water.

- Attendees noted that some areas, particularly the wide, flat area upstream of Bookman Island, were difficult to traverse in a canoe at flows of 1,200 cfs or less.
- Focus group attendees indicated that flows above 8,000 cfs limited most recreation opportunities.
- Attendees noted that passing flows through the west channel (directly downstream of Parr Shoals Dam) may provide additional paddling opportunities.

Current Downstream Access Areas, Needs, and Teaming/Cooperation Opportunities

- Focus group attendees noted that there are currently several access options in the AOI that include: Chestnut Hill; 213 Bridge; Harbison Forest.
- Attendees noted that most of these access options were not preferable due to safety concerns, lack of site maintenance by the entities that own them, or problems getting access (semi-public).
- The focus group facilitators discussed that Parr Hydroelectric Project lands end at the Parr Shoals Dam. However, facilitators and SCE&G noted that the focus group meetings could be used as a forum for focus group attendees to discuss teaming partnerships with the entities that own the current access areas and land within the AOI (Harbison Forest, counties, rowing clubs, etc.).
- Focus group attendees discussed that any downstream improvements should be focused on primitive access for non-motorized use. Access similar to Gardendale Landing on the lower Saluda River was preferred by the group.
- Attendees noted that new access that divided the AOI into 3 sections (7 to 8 miles a piece) would be preferable.
- SCE&G acknowledged that there may be opportunities to explore teaming arrangements between SCE&G and local stakeholders. This could include some agreement outside of relicensing. SCE&G clearly stated that they do not want to develop or maintain a park site outside of the Parr Shoals Project Boundary or extend the Project Boundary.
- Focus group attendees stated that paddling and bird watching opportunities would increase with improved access.

Other points and issues raised by focus group attendees:

- Focus group attendees indicated that the smallmouth bass fishery in AOI was one of the best in the southeast and fishermen were traveling to the AOI from other states to fish there.
- Attendees expressed concern regarding potential declines in the smallmouth bass population if too much access to the AOI is provided.
- Attendees noted that there was quite a bit of trash in the AOI due to irresponsible river users. Increased trash could also occur with increased access.

Notes submitted by focus group attendees subsequent to meeting:

- Subsequent to the meeting, a focus group attendee provided information regarding an article in the State Newspaper describing a potential paddle. This article suggested starting at the Peak Landing, paddling upstream to the Parr Shoals dam, then downstream on river-left to the trestle and back up to Peak Landing on river-right. The focus group attendee noted that this would be a great paddle, but not possible at low water levels and suggested that if a relatively small amount of water were spilled at the west end of the dam, this float would be possible.
- Subsequent to the meeting, a focus group attendee suggested that a small amount of water be spilled on the west side of the dam to make canoe portage easier.

Conclusions:

There were several common themes expressed during the focus group meeting discussions. Focus group attendees indicated that recreation occurs year-round in the AOI. The type of recreation varies seasonally (paddling and fishing during the warmer and higher flow months; fishing and duck hunting during the lower flow and colder months). Recreational flows preferred by focus group attendees varied by activity, but were generally between 1,500 cfs and 8,000 cfs. Teaming arrangements to improve access in the AOI could be explored by focus group attendees and downstream land-owners/counties, etc. SCE&G also noted that teaming arrangements between local stakeholders and SCE&G may be possible for the development of off-license access opportunities that will not be part of the Parr Shoals Project.

Appendix: Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. When was the last time you recreated on the Broad River, downstream of the Parr Shoals Dam?
2. What activities do you typically participate in? (Separate responses by activity on flip-chart)
3. How many times have you recreated on the river since this time last year?
4. Do you typically recreate during the week or on weekends? Why?
5. Is there a specific month that you tend to recreate most frequently? Why?
6. Are there any months that you generally avoid? Why?
7. What time of the day do you typically recreate?
8. What flow levels are most favorable to your activity of choice?
9. Looking at this map, what sites do you typically use to access the Broad River?
10. Why do you choose to use that site?
11. Are there any additional access sites needed on the Broad River? Where should these be located?