**RECORD OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION**

**REUSENS AND SCOTT’S MILL HYDROPOWER PROJECTS**

Conference Call Participants

Scott Smith – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)

Alan Weaver – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

David Sutherland – US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Jessica Pica – USFWS

Brett Towler – USFWS

Bob Gates – Eagle Creek Energy (Reusens Project)

Dan Parker – Eagle Creek Energy (Reusens Project)

Mark Fendig – Owner Scott’s Mill Dam, rep for Liberty University

Wayne Dyok – Consultant for Scott’s Mill Project Licensing

Date – August 25, 2017

**Agenda**

1. Fish species to pass
2. Upstream Passage
3. Downstream Passage
4. Monitoring
5. Maintenance

**Summary of Discussion**

Fish Species Passage

After the introductions, the resource agencies[[1]](#footnote-1) stated that they would like to see river connectivity, passage of anadromous and catadromous fish and resident fish species. More specifically, there appears to be an immediate need to pass American Eel and Sea Lamprey. Scott’s Mill representatives noted that they have been moving forward on the licensing of Scott’s Mill assuming that, at a minimum, American Eel and Sea Lamprey would need to be passed.

Eagle Creek asked if there was a fish restoration plan for the James River. At this time, no James River restoration plan has been developed, but the agencies operate under the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries management plans. However, there has been a concerted effort to restore anadromous fish, and specifically American Shad. The VDGIF pointed out that American Shad, American Eel and Sea Lamprey pass through the Boshers vertical slot fishway annually along with 20 plus other riverine fish species. The participants concurred that restoration of American Shad has not yet achieved target levels to fill the amount of spawning and rearing habitat upstream of Bosher’s Dam. The agencies commented that there are a variety of reasons for the low abundance. Hence in the short-term, American Shad passage is not as critical as for other species, but could become critical in the future.

Besides American Eel and Sea Lamprey, there was no final decision as to what additional species need to be passed now or in the longer term. The agencies will make a final decision later that will consider the James River basin upstream of Richmond, including the 7 dams situated within a 22-mile section of the James River, species needs, passage cost, and likelihood of success. (There is approximately 137 miles of mainstem habitat between Bosher’s Dam and Scott’s Mill Dam. There is an additional 153 miles of habitat on major James River tributaries between Scott’s Mill and Boshers Dam. Upstream of Cushaw Dam, there is a considerable amount of mainstem and tributary habitat that historically supported diadromous fish, although dams on the James River have limited fish movement since the 1840’s.)

Eagle Creek observed that a trap and haul program might best serve the needs of the basin upstream of Scott’s Mill because of the challenges and costs associated with moving aquatic species upstream of 7 dams. (This could be a more significant challenge at Reusens as the Reusens Dam is about 40 feet high.)

Scott’s Mill representatives observed that Gizzard Shad have been reported by anglers to be immediately downstream of Scott’s Mill dam and American Eel have been observed as far upstream as Cushaw Dam, but not in great numbers. This was confirmed by VDGIF.

In response to a question about the Scott’s Mill dam licensing status, Wayne responded that the draft application is expected to be distributed in September. For a variety of reasons, Liberty University will likely transfer the license to another entity after the license is issued. In the meantime, the application is being prepared with the intent to have safe, timely, and effective fish passage for both American Eel and Sea Lamprey.

Eagle Creek noted that they expected to start relicensing of Reusens in about 18 to 24 months. (The Reusens license expires on February 29, 2024.)

Upstream Fish Passage

The agencies suggested that Scott’s Mill work closely with them on the upstream design before a draft license application is developed. Wayne responded that is the intent, particularly once conceptual ideas and resource goals are integrated. **Action Item.** Scott’s Mill will work with its fish passage consultant and the USFWS to lay out potential fish passage approaches. This will include a trap and haul program, a nature-like fishway around the dam, and a fishway design to move American Eel and Sea Lamprey into the Scott’s Mill headpond. Agencies specifically asked about the potential for a nature-like fishway. Preliminary work done by Scott’s Mill indicates that a nature-like fishway would be on the order of 400 to 600 feet-long based on a head of about 17 feet. Given the limited room on the left side of the James River, necessary fishway length, and the fact that most flow will be on the right side of the river, the left side may not be feasible. Also on the right side, space is limited by the needs of U.S. Pipe Company for storing their pipe. Hence Scott’s Mill has been focusing on the area immediately to the left of the arch section of the dam as that area was historically used to provide for fish passage.

**Action Item.** Wayne suggested that it might be best to include the options for fish passage in the draft license application and then continue to work on the approach that is in the best public interest during the 90-day application review period.

**Action Item.** Scott’s Mill representatives will contact the other owners of the hydropower projects upstream (i.e., Holcomb Rock, Coleman Falls, Big Island, Snowden and Cushaw) to set up another conference call with resource agencies and dam owners. This meeting should occur once Scott’s Mill preliminary information on fish passage becomes available.

Downstream Passage

This agenda item was not discussed due to lack of time.

Monitoring

Wayne asked what type of monitoring requirements the resource agencies would expect to see. Because these are relatively small run-of-river projects, they cannot afford high monitoring costs. It was agreed that fish counts would be needed at least initially to monitor passage success. VDGIF monitors the James River mainstem annually and that will certainly help with the monitoring. However, tributaries are not currently monitored. Scott’s Mill requested that the agencies work with the dam owners to develop a plan that limits overall costs and possibly includes more agency involvement. This should be at a basin level upstream of Bosher’s dam.

Maintenance

This agenda item was also not discussed due to lack of time.

Agencies also asked about mussels. Wayne responded that Brian Watson of VDGIF had been provided a copy of the mussel survey conducted upstream and downstream of Scott’s Mill dam. The report will be included as an appendix in the Scott’s Mill license application.

1. Collectively VDGIF and USFWS are referred to as resource agencies. Since they are working together on fish passage, these notes do not differentiate among agency participants. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)