

January 18, 2001  
Social Sciences Working Group Meeting

**Rocky Reach  
Recreation Use Assessment Report**

**First Draft Comment Summary**

## **RESPONSES TO USFS LETTER DATED NOVEMBER 30, 2000:**

### **General Overall Comments**

A short summary at the beginning of each section would be useful in helping the reader to understand the findings of each section rather than trying to interpret numbers and charts.

**Response: A short summary has been added, where appropriate, to the beginning of each subsection of the "Results" (Section 5) section of the report.**

The report has a lot of numbers that need some clarification to help determine what the demand for recreation is, and whether the demand is currently being met, and more importantly, where it is not being met, especially during the peak season months of July and August. The general impression of the summary of results shows that the demand is being met overall with the estimated daily capacity, however, what is really happening on the ground may not support the results of the summary.

**Response: A needs analysis will be conducted that will assess recreation demands and needs. The purpose of the Recreation Use Assessment Report is to report on data collection and field monitoring that was conducted in 1999 and 2000.**

The tables and figures in the report should be self explanatory (stand alone) in order to make any conclusions about the data. It is difficult to interpret the information that relates to each table or figure in the text, and when data is relevant to a change in use patterns or some other useful conclusion. An example of this is Table 5-1: Rocky Reach Project Visitor Counts – Based on Traffic Counters, there is a footnote explaining the peak use in 1994 tied to extensive forest fires, but what about the year 1998? That year, use figures are up dramatically, the question is why? What are some other events that have influenced use patterns, such as the Apple Blossom Festival in Wenatchee.

**Response: Further information has been added to Table 5-1 as well as the text explaining the high numbers in 1998 at Entiat Park.**

The Forest Service identified additional study needs for the Recreation Use Assessment Visitor Survey previous to completion of the survey, in order to determine recreation use patterns occurring up the Entiat Valley on federal lands and in Entiat Park. (Ref. pages 1-5, FS EIA for Rocky Reach, 1999). This is being addressed through the study goal 13; the results of the analysis are not available in this First Draft Study Report, so we are unable to provide comments at this time.

**Response: The results of the Entiat Park and USFS survey have been included in the second draft report.**

### **5.1 Estimates of Use at Recreation Sites**

What is the time frame for the peak season being used in the analysis? If it is Memorial Day through Labor Day, that gives one use pattern, however, it appears that the high peak season months within this time frame are July and August. We need to see these months broken out to display another use pattern, where we believe demand is greater than supply. This will add to the current baseline of use for answering the question of when campgrounds and facilities are full and what needs to be done to manage for this?

**Response: The time frame for each monitoring section is provided in the first paragraph of Section 4: Methodology and on Tables 5-2 and 5-3. Also, average visitor use by month is provided on Table 5-2.**

What is the relationship between the physical size of park and capacity of campsites and facilities, for example Orondo River Park is only 5 acres in size, but the physical capacity is estimated to be 346 people (overnight and day use), that seems like a lot of people for a small site. Orondo River Park seems to function as an overflow site for Daroga Park.

**Response: For the Recreation Use Assessment, capacity is reviewed in terms of the number of campsites and parking spaces. Other types of capacity measurements will be assessed in the Needs Analysis. At Orondo River Park, the campground is generally not full, except on some busy weekends and holidays. However day use activity was shown to be very high. This is due to high traffic counts measured at the site which is probably due to many vehicles driving in and out of the site.**

Another question has to do with the turnover rates for day use and how the site is being used, how do people get counted if they are the longer day users, those that stay 8 – 10 hours a day? It would be helpful to display the average number of hours for day use in a chart form for each site.

**Response: The average number of hours day users stay at the sites, based on on-site interviews, is provided in Section 5.1.2, under each recreation site subsection, under "Additional Information from On-site Interviews". The average length of stay for visitors at all recreation sites is summarized in Section 5.6. Based on on-site interviews at recreation sites, visitors who were not staying overnight (day-users) stayed an average of 4.3 hours.**

#### **5.1.1 Recreation Use at Individual Sites**

Once again the capacity numbers are based on a hypothetical capacity, is there a need to look at an additional measure to determine what is really happening on the ground? This may be done by looking at occupancy rate vs. the capacity rate and/or to look at a range of PAOTs from 1-xx. We would recommend looking at the Final Study Report 1998/1999 Recreational Use Assessment for Lake Chelan Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 637 where this range was done to determine occupancy rate.

**Response:** Further review of occupancy and capacity rates will be assessed in the Needs Analysis Report although a range of capacity as was presented in the Lake Chelan Recreation Report for USFS campgrounds is not really appropriate for Rocky Reach campgrounds for the following reasons. Lake Chelan USFS campground use was based on field observations of the number of campsites occupied multiplied by an average of 3 people per campsite, since the USFS did not have data regarding campground occupancy. In the first draft of the Lake Chelan Recreation Report, the estimated campground use based on an average of 3 people per campsite was compared to a capacity using 3 people per campsite. This allowed a direct comparison of the number of campsites occupied with the number of available campsites at the USFS campground. Based on observations and interviews at USFS campgrounds, the social capacity of the campsites and the actual use of campsites appeared to be around 3 people per campsite. In a comment letter, the USFS stated that they manage their sites using 5 people per campsite and wished to revise the report to reflect this. A capacity using 5 people per campsite, therefore, was provided in the report and compared with the visitor use estimates based on 3 people per campsite, even though this can not provide a comparison of actual campsite occupancy. A range of 3 to 5 people per campsite compared with campground visitor use was then provided in the Final Report. At the Lake Chelan state park campgrounds, the state parks department provided data of the number of campsites occupied and a direct comparison was made; the number of visitors camping was based on 5 people per occupied campsite and the capacity was based on 5 people per campsite.

At Rocky Reach campgrounds, direct comparisons are made. The number of campsites occupied is multiplied by an average of 5 people per campsite and the capacity is determined based on the number of campsites multiplied by 5 people per campsite. The physical utilization, therefore, is the same when comparing numbers of people or the number of campsites occupied versus the number of campsites available. In the Rocky Reach Needs Analysis, interview data will be reviewed in more detail to define the social capacity of the sites and whether or not the social capacity is being exceeded.

#### **Rocky Reach Dam Recreation Facilities and Visitor Center**

Page 5-7 Activities: Feeding the rabbits is a significant activity that occurs near the entrance to the park, many people come just to feed and observe the rabbits, turn around and leave without ever entering the parking area. Was this activity and use counted?

**Response:** Feeding the rabbits does occur at Rocky Reach Dam, although people are not likely drawn to the Rocky Reach area for this reason, nor are facilities needed for this specific type of activity. Although field personnel documented the number of people by activity, feeding rabbits was not a separate activity category on the field forms. Activity categories were based on standard types of activities used by state and other recreation management agencies. Watching the rabbits would have likely been documented in the "nature study/photography" category of the field form. At Rocky Reach Dam, less than one percent of visitors to the site were

**documented participating in this activity during the peak-season, whereas, seven percent of visitors were documented participating in this activity during the spring-season.**

### **Daroga State Park**

There is either a typo or mistake on page 5-23 at the top of the page; the text references Orondo River Park instead of Daroga State Park for average number of nights that overnight respondents stay.

**Response: This typo has been corrected. Thank you.**

### **5.1.2 Distribution of Use**

Do the tables 5-1 through 5-3 mix day use and overnight use? Should the day use and overnight use be broken out in these figures? What are the definitions of seasons and weekends? For instance, is Thursday and/or Friday night counted as part of the weekend? By adjusting the data to include Thursday night as part of the weekend use, the results may be different; we need to see July and August broken out.

**Response: As explained in the text, Table 5-1 is based on traffic counters only. Tables 5-2 and 5-3 are based on field monitoring and break out overnight use (camping) and day use. The definition of seasons is explained in the first paragraph of Section 4 Methodology and is shown on Tables 5-2 and 5-3. Weekends include Friday night and Saturday night for overnight/camping and Saturday and Sunday for day-use. Footnotes have been added to the tables. Thursday night generally does not see as much activity as Friday and Saturday night. Adjusting the data to include Thursday night would result in average weekend use being lower than what is currently shown on Tables 5-2 and 5-3 and would not reflect what is actually occurring on weekends. Average visitor use for each peak-season month, including July and August, are shown on Table 5-2.**

### **5.1.3 Activities Based on On-site Interviews**

It is not clear on how the other secondary activities count if you are camping as your primary activity. Would other day use activities count if you are camping, such as walking or using the day use access beaches for swimming, etc...How does the activity of "walking" relate to access to trails? Orondo River Park has 16% of its activity tied to walking, but there are no trails at this park.

**Response: Section 5.1.3 (now 5.1.5) under "Estimates of Recreation Use at Public Recreation Sites by Activity" explains how visitor use by activity was estimated. Interviews provided information regarding the main reasons that people come to the Project area for and what other types of activities they engage in during their visit. Visitor use estimates, however, were calculated based on campground fee receipt data where available and observations. At Project area parks, there are some visitors who are only at the parks for day use activities and there are many overnight visitors who also participate in day use activities. During observations, many campsites were occupied, but there were no people to count at the campsite.**

**For this reason, visitor use estimates of camping activity are based on the number of campsites occupied multiplied by an average of 5 people per campsite (refer to the beginning of Section 5.1.2). Many people who were camping were not at the campsites, but were participating in day-use activities. Since campground use is calculated using fee receipt data or the number of campsites observed occupied multiplied by an average of 5 people per campsite, then people camping would be counted whether or not they were at the campsite when observations were being made. People observed and counted participating in day use activities would be counted as a day use activity, even though these people may also be camping. Visitor use provides estimates of facility use.**

**Walking is not necessarily related to trail use. People observed walking, whether they were walking from and to the restroom, to the beach, to their car in the parking lot, etc. were counted as walking. The high percentage of walking activity at Orondo River Park would include people walking anywhere in the park.**

**5.9 Displaced Use and Relationship with Upper Entiat Valley USFS sites**

Analysis is still to be completed.

**Response: Analysis has been complete and is now included in the Recreation Use Assessment Report.**

**Section 6: SUMMARY**

Need information added about the displaced use and relationship with Upper Entiat Valley USFS sites when it becomes available.

**Response: Analysis has been complete and is now included in the Recreation Use Assessment Report.**

## **RESPONSES TO IAC COMMENTS DATED NOV 2, 2000:**

In general, the assessment does a good job of describing current recreation associated with the Rocky Reach project. FERC also requires us to consider "potential" recreation. The data and conclusions of the recreational use assessment will be a useful foundation for the discussion of potential recreation.

**Response: The data provided in the Recreation Use Assessment will be used in the analysis of recreation needs and potential in the Rocky Reach Project area.**

Consider moving Section 6, Summary, to the beginning of the document. It may be useful to have the Summary in both places.

**Response: The USFS has also indicated a need for summaries. Rather than duplicate the summary at the back of the report, brief summaries have been added, where appropriate, to the beginning of each subsection of the "Results" (Section 5) of the report.**

The draft assessment looks in detail at seven developed, public sites. Will there be additional work to consider private, open-to-the-public facilities and their contribution to the recreation estate in the project vicinity?

**Response: The Recreation Inventory will look at other private recreation facilities in the Project area.**

Capacity estimates are used throughout. It is IAC's position that a facility does not have to be 100% occupied to be considered "at capacity." Discussion found in "Study Plan Document REC 5-5" developed for PacifiCorp earlier this year should be considered as an additional tool for assessing capacity. REC 5-5 uses a scale with supporting text that considers 40% occupancy as "optimal," 60% as "well utilized," 80% as "heavily utilized," and 100% as "extreme use." This scale would help explain the many comments from facility users who rated sites 9 or above on a 10-point scale while asking for sites with "fewer people." I would like to see this scale considered in the next draft of the recreation assessment. (With this in mind, Tables 5-2 and 5-3 could be made a bit more useful by adding a column to depict occupancy by percent.

**Response: A new Section 5.1.4 has been added to the text which discusses utilization at recreation sites. Threshold level definitions, as you have described, are included in this section. It was not possible to fit another column into Tables 5-2 or 5-3, therefore, a new figure (Figure 5-7) has been included in Section 5.1.4 that shows the seasonal utilization for each site and the supporting text discusses the utilization of each sites based on the threshold level definitions.**

On page 5-1, the text states that growth of recreation visits between 1978 and 1999 exhibited an estimated annual growth rate of 10.4 percent. Recent growth has slowed to 2.5 percent. While variance is to be expected from year to year, the overall pattern indicates that existing facilities have reached their capacity, and that accommodating future demand will be impossible without increasing capacity whether through better management or expansion of existing sites, or provision of new sites.

**Response: As indicated in the Report, all public recreation sites on Lake Entiat are full on many busy peak-season weekends and on most Holidays. Whereas, during peak-season weekdays, weekends in early summer and during off-seasons that parks are open there is existing capacity at most sites. Due to general population increases expected in Washington State and resulting increases in recreation activities, additional visitors can be expected, especially if additional quality facilities are added. Further review of potential future needs based on population projections will be reviewed in the Needs Analysis.**

Note that Table 5-1 clearly demonstrates that the public demands and uses quality sites and facilities: there has been an 800 percent increase in visits to developed sites between 1978 and 1999. Sites appear to reach "capacity" within a few years of coming on line. Throughout the text, reference is made to sites available through reservation systems. Demand can be further indicated by reservation records such as how far in advance sites "fill up," total number of reservations, and so on. If it is possible to locate this data, it would be helpful to the overall discussion.

**Response: Information on reservation records, if available, will be included in the Needs Analysis.**

Figure 5-7. primary activity at recreation sites indicates that sites are being utilized as intended. Figure 5-8 may be more useful for future discussion of potential recreation development, as there appears to be latent demand captured in that Figure. For example, walking-jogging, bicycling, and rollerblading are linear activities that best accommodated by trails and paths, but people may be currently walking and rollerblading in parking areas and along park roads, and bicycling on crowded paths intended for pedestrians.

**Response: Comment noted. This data will be reviewed further in the Needs Analysis.**

Other current uses that appear to need additional facilities seem to focus on boating. "More docks" is a common response to the open question for virtually every site. I do not see response indicating need for more launches (and the parking space data supports this observation), which raises the question of how people are actually using boats. It could be that people are arriving at campgrounds with a boat on a trailer, and wishing to launch once at the beginning of a 4-5 day visit. With limited transient dock space, however, people may be obliged to launch and retrieve multiple times per visit. On the

other hand, people may be asking for courtesy docks to facilitate boat launching and retrieving. More detail would be helpful.

**Response: The "more docking" and "better docking" category on the interview form as well as comments received from interview respondents do not provide any indications as to whether visitors would like to see more moorage type of docks or more docks at the boat launches to facilitate boat launching. Attempts have been made to contact park managers, but because of the time of year it has difficult to reach them at this time. We will continue to attempt to contact park managers or others who may be able to provide information regarding what types of additional docks visitors may be requesting. Information obtained will be provided in the Needs Analysis Report.**

The discussion of watercraft use acknowledges that creel survey results will help fill-in the overall boat use data. I agree. It will be helpful to know what species are being pursued by recreational fishers, especially with respect to potential changes in fishery management that may be under discussion with fish management agencies.

**Response: A section on angling activity, including a summary of the results of the creel surveys, has been included as Section 5.2.2 in the Report.**

It is important to note the demographics of facility visitors. Clearly, the project lands and waters are of statewide significance. The agreeable weather, good boating waters, open spaces, and quality facilities are drawing people from considerable distances, especially from the Seattle metropolitan area. When discussing potential recreation, it will be as important to consider growth in population and demand in the Seattle metro area as it will be to consider local population growth and demand.

**Responses: The Needs Analysis will assess population projections based on visitors' origin.**

The discussion of displaced visitors is good. I note that displaced visitors prefer to stay in the project vicinity. This makes sense when one considers that a visitor who has driven up to four hours from the Seattle area would not want to drive much further to find a spot. The relatively small numbers of displaced visitors may also be evidence that the reservation systems in place are working as intended, giving people assurance of a site before they set out. The small numbers may also indicate that "the word is out" that it's hard to find a place without advance reservations or early arrival. Augmenting this discussion with the USFS-requested Entiat study will be very helpful.

**Response: The analysis of the Entiat/USFS survey data has been completed and a summary of the results is included in the Report (Section 5.9.2)**

With respect to dispersed recreational use, it would be helpful to describe the official zoning or designation of the lands being used. If, for example, people are accessing the

river by crossing railroad tracks, we have a potential trespass and safety issue that needs to be addressed by the appropriate organization (not necessarily the PUD). The reasons why people are using these dispersed sites would be helpful for discussion of potential recreation. Are the beaches better; is the fishing better; are people faced with full parking lots at day use sites; are people avoiding fees; do the dispersed users avoid official sites because of discomfort with respect to ethnic issues; is there a lack of information on available sites?

**Response:** Some further information has been added to the text regarding types of land uses that dispersed recreation is occurring. Most of the dispersed use is occurring on Turtle Rock Island, which is owned by Chelan PUD; on City owned Entiat River Delta; on mostly private and some state, Chelan PUD and BLM owned undeveloped shorelines between Daroga State Park and Beebe Bridge; and land owned by Chelan PUD and managed by WDFW, upstream of Beebe Bridge. Land ownership/use in the Project area is currently being researched and mapped and will be provided in the Land Use Report. Generally, it has been found that people recreating at undeveloped areas boat in to these areas to get away from people; they desire more secluded undeveloped locations.

Finally, I have to ask about the "bunny run" or abandoned pet area at Rocky Reach dam. How are visits to the "bunny area" counted on page 5-7? Nature study, sightseeing, other activity? The "bunny run" is unique in the truest sense of the word and merits a bit of discussion in the text. If "bunny run" is not the correct term, please let me know.

**Response:** Viewing the bunnies does occur at Rocky Reach Dam, although people are not likely drawn to the Rocky Reach area for this reason, nor are facilities needed for this specific type of activity. Although field personnel documented the number of people by activity, viewing bunnies was not a separate activity category on the field forms. Activity categories were based on standard types of activities used by state and other recreation management agencies. Watching the bunnies would have likely been documented in the "nature study/photography" category of the field form. At Rocky Reach Dam, less than one percent of visitors to the site were documented participating in this activity during the peak-season, whereas, seven percent of visitors were documented participating in this activity during the spring-season.

**OTHER CHANGES TO ROCKY REACH FIRST DRAFT RECREATION USE ASSESSMENT REPORT (IN ADDITION TO THOSE DESCRIBED IN RESPONSES TO IAC AND USFS COMMENTS):**

Addition of Enitiat Survey results and USFS Campground survey results to 5.9.2 and 6.11 of report.

Addition of summary of results of Creel Survey to Section 5.2.2 of report. Also included summary of angling activity, based on boat run and car run observations and on-site interviews, in Section 5.2.2 and Section 6.7 of report.

Addition of spring demographic data (not available during first draft of report) to each recreation site discussion under Section 5.1.2, Section 5.3 and Section 6.8 of report.

Under sections discussing Entiat Park, provided discussions comparing campground use when breaking out RV Camping and Tent camping (Section 5.1.2 and 5.2.4).

Added additional information regarding Chelan PUD acreage in Section 3.

Added additional headings to help clarify report sections.

Added text regarding dispersed shoreline use on Entiat River sandbar in Section 5.2.1.