

#### 4.2.8 Aesthetic Resources:

Adequacy of aesthetic resources in the project area

#### Goals and Objectives

5.9 (b)(1) – Describe the goals and objectives of each study proposal and the information to be obtained.

The goal of this study is to evaluate the adequacy of the aesthetics between the dam and the Hydro Power Plant area

Canal – assess the need for improvements to cement sides of canal and bridges over the canal, to put the electrical lines along the canal underground, streetscape improvements to rear (canal) facing building facades on Canal St. to complete fencing improvements along the canal, to improve the walkways and sidewalks, signage and lighting on the Island, improve sight and walking connections between the Island and the downtown, and assess the possibility for periodic flow reduction for (bonfire display or other scenic 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday opportunity - visitor draw like Providence R.I. has), study of the impact of the project on revitalization of the Island in general and participating in the realization of Island Master Plan improvements

Specifically the objectives of the study include:

- Assess the adequacy of the aesthetics of the Canal
- Assess the adequacy of the aesthetics of the Bridges over the canal
- Assess the adequacy of the aesthetics of the Reach around the “Island”
- Assess the adequacy of pedestrian and visitor facilities on the Island

5.9 (b)(2) – If Applicable, explain the relevant resource management goals of the agencies or Indian tribes with jurisdiction over the resource to be studied.

Not applicable.

5.9 (b)(3) – If the requestor is not a resource agency, explain any relevant public interest consideration in regard to the proposed study.

Sections 4(e) and 10(a) of the Federal Power Act (FPA) require the Commission to give equal consideration to all uses of the waterway on which a project is located. When reviewing a proposed action, the Commission must consider the environmental, recreational, fish and wildlife, and other non-developmental values of the project, as well as power and developmental values. Any license issued shall be best adapted to a comprehensive plan for improving or developing a waterway or waterways for all beneficial public uses.

Ensuring that these aesthetic resources are considered in a reasoned way is relevant to the Commission's public interest determination. As supported in the Rockingham Town Plan Chapter 8 on Historic Resources: Goal 3 - To encourage the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, repair, and adaptive re-use of historic houses, outbuildings, barns, commercial and industrial buildings, and bridges; and Action Steps - 2. The Town will seek grant funds for streetscape improvements to the rear building facades on Canal Street; 11. Encourage the preservation and interpretation of historically significant industrial and commercial sites, including manufacturing, mining, papermaking, energy production, agriculture and transportation; will continue Town support for the Connecticut River Byway and Waypoint Center including working with adjacent Towns, businesses and other organizations. Seek additional grants for 86 Rockingham Town Plan revolving displays, and a Waypoint curator to coordinate exhibits in conjunction with other Interpretive Centers; 16. The Town will continue to support the creation of a railroad museum in the Island/Downtown Bellows Falls National Register Historic District in cooperation with the active railroads in the Town and State. 17. Under Town direction, continue to participate in environmental assessment and necessary remedial action, to further re-use and/or rehabilitation of the Town owned TLR mill buildings on Mill St., Bellows Falls. 18. The Town, through the Development Office, will seek funds for a feasibility study for a regional Connecticut River archeological study center located in Bellows Falls and sited in underutilized historic buildings, such as the TLR mill buildings.

#### Background and Existing Information

5.9 (b)(4) – Describe existing information concerning the subject of the study proposal, and the need for additional information.

- An Island Revitalization Master Plan is underway that is providing recommendations for these aesthetics
- An informational memorandum by American Whitewater and New England FLOW
- Regional Planning Commission information as available

#### Project Nexus

5.9 (b)(5) – Explain any nexus between project operations and effects (direct, indirect, and/or cumulative) on the resource to be studied, and how the study results would inform the development of license requirements.

The aesthetics between the dam and the Hydro Power Plant area are really detrimental to residents, visitors and tourists, including the areas depleted of water by the dam, the crumbling canal and bridges over the canal.

Proposed Methodology

5.9 (b)(6) – Explain how any proposed study methodology (including any preferred data collection and analysis techniques, or objectively quantified information, and a schedule including appropriate field season(s) and the duration) is consistent with generally accepted practice in the scientific community or, as appropriate, considers relevant tribal values and knowledge.

Proposed methods include:

There is currently a planning study that will make some recommendations along these lines – will be completed in April 2013.

Field reconnaissance surveys and community participation, consulting with:

For the Canal Aesthetics, BF Island Reach, and General Island Aesthetic and Infrastructure Improvement - the Byways Commission, the Grafton Nature Museum, the Rockingham Historical Society (CLG Commission), the Bellows Falls Historical Society, the and the local Waypoint Committees, the Bellows Falls Downtown Development Association (BFDDA), Rockingham Planning Commission and Island Revitalization Committee

For the Bridges – Windham Regional Commission and Town Engineer/Highway Dept and BFDDA

Level of Effort and Cost

5.9 (b)(7) – Describe considerations of level of effort and cost, as applicable, and why any proposed alternative studies would not be sufficient to meet the stated information needs.

- Field reconnaissance and surveys: estimated to be \$20,000 to \$35,000 depending on the intensity of the surveys; 1 to 2 technicians per project area for 20 hours per week for 2 to 4 weeks to conduct field work. Report Preparation 1 to 2 days per project area.

For Canal Visitor opportunities - controlled flow study of a range of alternative flow releases and determine the minimum and optimum in-stream flow needed for periodic activity such at the Providence, RI Canal light shows and prepare a report that describes the canal attributes of the range of flows examined, including level of difficulty for implementing a visitor – tourist visual activity, etc.

Canal Visitor tourism opportunity \$5,000. The study may be completed in on study season (12 weeks).

1 to 2 technicians would be expected to spend 4 hours each to prepare the study plan; 1 to 2 days of field work conducting and documenting study flows, and 1 to 2 days preparing the report – this does not include the cost of providing the flows.