

4.2.6 Recreation:

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 existing recreation and public use facilities in meeting existing and future regional public use and river access needs, the effect of project operations on quality and availability of flow-dependent and water level-dependent recreation opportunities, including boating, and the adequacy of structural integrity, physical capacity, and/or management methods to support recreation use at existing facilities.

Specifically the objectives of the study include:

- Assess the adequacy of the Herrick's Cove recreation area and potential improvements, to include camping, kayaking and sanitary facilities within the area's proximity
- Assess the opportunity for a state park on and around the Herrick's Cove area and the additional TransCanada land in that proximity and including adjoining private property whose landowners' have expressed interest
- Assess the adequacy of multi-day canoe/kayak trips north and south of the dam and available access points, camping and sanitary facilities – including access and portage requirements for example – transportation requirement to travel from above the project area to below the project area
- Assess the existing Trail Systems and the opportunity for connectivity including the around the Herrick's Cove area through the village and north through Rockingham and Springfield, and connecting the Island to the Historic Riverfront Park and Trail System, connecting to Pinnacle Trail system,
- Assess implementation of the Bicycle-pedestrian rails and trails multi-use pathway from Northfield, MA to Bellows Falls, (see existing information – feasibility study)
- Evaluate the effects of project operation on the availability of whitewater recreational opportunities downstream for the BF Dam and to identify potential measures to alleviate those effects and to enhance whitewater boating opportunities – determine the range of flows and the optimum flow that would provide whitewater boating opportunities in the project bypassed reach of the CT River around the BF Island
- Assess the adequacy of the recreation management and controls with special focus on the Island area where the Canal and PowerPlant reside – managing and staffing the Visitor areas – Fish Ladder and Waypoint Center
- Assess the adequacy of management of the CT River Byways and specifically the Waypoint centers on the Byway along the 3 project areas of Vernon to White River Junction

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 recreational resources are considered in a reasoned way is relevant to the Commission's public interest determination. Windham Regional Commission - Regional Plan Section 7.10: "Bicycling and walking are also expected to continue strong growth in popularity and with it, support for multi-use paths, trails, and linear parks or greenways" and "The Windham Region is rich in water resources. Residents and visitors utilize the many rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs, and ponds for water recreation such as swimming, boating, and fishing. There is a shortage of access"

Rockingham Town Plan:

Policies 1. The use and development of land and waters should take into consideration the impact on recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, canoeing and boating, skiing, horseback riding, snowmobiling and other outdoor recreational activities.

And 6. The community, working with public and private organizations and individuals, should encourage improved access to the Connecticut River resources.

Action Steps: 4. Improve existing and establish new access to local rivers.

- *Work with the Bellows Falls Historical Society (BFHS) in the area off Mill St. to create a riverside park and historic interpretive walkway.

- *Work with the Town of Westminster and Bellows Falls Union High School to connect the BFHS interpretive path system to the Basin Farm and other trail systems.

- *Evaluate the feasibility of creating a pathway from Bellows Falls to Herrick's Cove.

- * Encourage Saxtons River Village to create a park on village land adjacent to the Centennial Bridge and waterfalls, and a walkway along the village land.

6. The Selectboard and Planning Commission will review concerns and other issues dealing with Herrick's Cove and recreational uses along the Connecticut River in anticipation of participating in the TransCanada FERC license renewal process in 2018.

7. The Development Office shall investigate and develop a preliminary plan for a system of paths for non-motorized travel such as hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and bicycling. For example, a Williams River trail, a Parker Hill trail, and a Darby Hill trail. Separate trails are recommended for snowmobiling and all-terrain vehicles.

8. The Development Office shall work with the Bellows Falls Union High School District and the Rockingham and Upper Valley Land Trusts to develop an assessment study for a path system to connect Bellows Falls through the Basin Farm areas with trails on the Bellows Falls Union High School land.

Background and Existing Information

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

- Information on the Herricks Cove Recreational Area does not assess the current adequacy of the recreational area

- Information on the trails systems of various organizations – does not assess the adequacy of connectivity between trail systems and information for user-friendliness

- A Northfield to Bellows Falls rails with trails multi-use path feasibility study Final Report September 2001: For Windham Regional Commission, funded by Vermont Agency of Transportation, prepared by Stevens & Associates, PC and Ms. Kathleen D. Williams, Brattleboro, VT in association with Alta Transportation – Mr. Michael Jones San Rafael, California; Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, New York, NY; Monroe Whitaker/Landscape Architect (MW/LA) Brattleboro, VT assesses the feasibility and lays out a plan - needs implementation

- An informational memorandum by American Whitewater and New England FLOW

- Windham Regional Planning Commission and Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission information varies regarding preparation and publication for user-friendliness and does not adequately address the connectivity issue

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 project area includes a huge area, including recreational watershed and reservoir areas that are the prime outdoor recreational areas in the extensive region of the project area. The area is a prime spot for a state park.

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:

Field reconnaissance surveys and community participation, consulting with:

For the Management of the Byway and Waypoint Centers - the Byways Commission, the Regional Planning Commissions (Windham and Southern Windsor County), the Grafton Nature Museum, the Rockingham Historical Society (CLG Commission), the Bellows Falls Historical Society, the and the local Waypoint Committees, Bellows Falls Downtown Development Association and the Greater Falls Regional Chamber of Commerce

For the Herricks Cove Recreation Area – the Rockingham Conservation Commission, the VT State Parks, the Grafton Nature Museum, the Rockingham Historical Society (CLG Commission), the Bellows Falls Historical Society, and the Greater Falls Regional Chamber of Commerce and including the trail connectivity below

For Trail Connectivity - Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association, National Park Service River and Trails System, VT Trail and Greenways Associations - Council – (of Trail Councils), VT Forests and Parks, and the Regional Planning Commissions And for the biking trails specifically add the VT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition

For Whitewater boating opportunities - controlled flow study of a range of alternative flow releases and determine the minimum and optimum in-stream flow needed for whitewater boating in the BF Island Reach and prepare a report that describes the whitewater boating attributes of the range of flows examined, including level of difficulty, portage requirements, length of trip, experiences, etc.

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.

The estimated cost of this study is:

Hiking Trails, Biking Trails Herrick's Cove, state park, Byways and Waypoint Centers - Field reconnaissance and surveys: estimated to be \$50,000 to \$75,000 depending on the intensity of the surveys; 1 to 2 technicians per project area for 40 hours per week for 2 to 4 weeks to conduct field work. Report Preparation 1 to 2 days per project area.

Whitewater Boating 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.