



DRAFT MEETING NOTES*
LEE VINING, FERC PROJECT NO. 1388
RECREATION AND LAND USE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING
FEBRUARY 28, 2024, 1:30-2:30 PM

**These meeting notes are documentation of general discussions from the meeting held on the above-noted date and focus on stakeholder questions and comments. These notes are not a verbatim account of proceedings and do not represent any final decisions or official documentation for the project or participating agencies.*

1.0 OBJECTIVES

- Review REC-1 work to date
- Present 2024 implementation plans for REC-1

2.0 ATTENDEES

Relicensing Team Members

Matt Woodhall, SCE
Martin Ostendorf, SCE
Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt
Shannon Luoma, Kleinschmidt
Kelly Larimer, Kleinschmidt
Angela Whelpley, Kleinschmidt
Carissa Shoemaker, Kleinschmidt
Hannah Gorin, Kleinschmidt
Ethan Muhlenstein, Kleinschmidt

Technical Working Group Members & Interested Parties

Adam Barnett, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Courtney Rowe, USFS
Dannon Dirgo, USFS
Sheila Irons, USFS
Adam Cohen, State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)
Bryan Muro, SWRCB
Graham Meese, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
Bartshe Miller, Mono Lake Committee
Allison Weber, Friends of the Inyo

3.0 COMPILED ACTION ITEMS (SEE SECTION 8.0 FOR ACTION ITEM FOLLOW-UPS)

- **Relicensing Team** will find past TWG notes regarding trail counter locations around Saddlebag Lake and send to USFS (Adam Barnett and Dannon Dirgo).
- **Relicensing Team** will continue to monitor Tioga Pass opening dates with USFS (i.e., Jameisha Washington), NPS, and CalDOT.

- **Graham Meese (CDFW)** will confirm with fisheries supervisor if one photo of an angler's catch is enough for the creel survey data and if a photo can be optional.
- **Relicensing Team** will review what terms USFS uses in user monitoring survey protocols and make the questionnaire language consistent (e.g., "pristine site").
- **Relicensing Team** will make the winter recreation terms more generic to include backcountry skiing, snowboarding, and snowmobiling as potential uses.
- **Relicensing Team** will follow up with Mono County regarding potential paving of Saddlebag Lake Road.
- **Adam Barnett (USFS)** will get campground use data from 2023 and follow up with the special use permit coordinator to get data.

4.0 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Shannon Luoma, Kleinschmidt, welcomed Technical Working Group (TWG) members to the meeting, and provided an overview of the agenda.

5.0 RECREATION AND LAND USE TWG

Shannon Luoma went over a summary of what we want to discuss. There was a huge snowfall in winter 2022-2023 which delayed the REC-1 study season to this year (2024). We had a TWG meeting before 2023 season would have occurred, with several check-ins as the months progressed and access was still limited, and all agreed to postpone. This is a regroup of the team before our REC-1 implementation this spring. We reviewed previous comments received and identified that the Mono Lake Committee and Access Fund had requested that SCE include the CalDOT site as a survey and spot count location, which we are now including in the field study.

Angela Whelpley shows the study area maps and explains that the Tioga Lake Overlook and Glacier Canyon sites are now combined into one co-located site rather than two separate survey sites.

Trail and Traffic Counters

Angela Whelpley summarized plan for trail and traffic counters.

(Q) Adam Barnett – Wondering about the Saddlebag Lake trail, are we collecting use data on the trail going both directions or just at the start at Day Use Area?

(R) Angela Whelpley – We have two trail counters planned, one at the Day Use Area and where trail meanders off to Yosemite toad habitat to the east. There is currently not a trail counter proposed on the west side of Saddlebag Lake Dam.

(R) Adam Barnett - We should try and include a counter there on the west side if possible. Hopefully not too late to add. Did we discuss this before? We'd like to see people that go all the way around the lake, or either direction around the lake, or accessing areas around the lake and the northwest side of the lake.

(R) Angela Whelpley pulled up the trail counter locations for everyone to see. From previous discussions, the trail on the west side are believed to have no project nexus because they go out to wilderness areas

and don't stay near the reservoir. We placed trail counters in areas that are more defined and have a potential project nexus.

(R) Adam Barnett – I disagree and I think a trail counter on the west side should be included. Please provide me with notes from the past meetings where we discussed this to refresh my memory. I would place a counter where the trail leaves the dam crossing. There is a nexus because the trail location is related to the waterline / reservoir edge regardless of where people are actually headed.

(R) Dannon Dirgo – Supporting Adam's suggestion. A trail counter there would give us a better understanding if there is nexus or not.

(R) Shannon Luoma – We will review past notes and follow up with you both again.

Creel Survey

Angela Whelpley summarized plan for creel surveys.

(C) Adam Barnett – Your team is probably taking this into account, but we are creeping up on average snow year. Tioga Pass may not be open until late May. Make sure team is prepared to shift survey dates if pass is still closed when you anticipate starting surveys. Jameisha Washington can help out with opening dates too, she's just out this week in training.

(R) Angela Whelpley – Yes, we are absolutely prepared to shift as needed and stay in consultation with USFS.

(Q) Angela Whelpley – For creel data, is one photo of all fish from each angler sufficient or do we need individual photos of each fish? And can this be an optional item for the creel survey, or make it mandatory? We may need to throw out data if it is mandatory.

(R) Graham Meese – I will take that question to fisheries supervisor, I think it's to aid us in confirming fish identification. The more photos the better and the clearer the photos the better. Most anglers want people to take photos of their fish. Optional should be okay, I will confirm with the fisheries supervisor.

Visitor Intercept Survey

Angela Whelpley summarized plan for visitor intercept surveys and explained a clarification detail added to the survey forms: "Upper Lee Vining Canyon" not "Lee Vining Canyon" in several locations on the forms.

(Q) Angela Whelpley – Can we change "How much time will you spend on your trip?" to "What is the anticipated duration of your visit in the Upper LVC?"

(R) Adam Barnett – I approve that change.

(Q) Angela Whelpley – For the facility quantity group question and the opinion about quantity – "about right, too high, too low?" can we change that to "too many or too few?"

(R) Adam Barnett – I approve that change and I see several thumbs up from the TWG.

(Q) Angela Whelpley – for the quality rating, can we change to "non-usable to pristine"?

(R) Adam Barnett – I suggest checking what USFS uses in the National Visitor User Monitoring survey protocols. Not sure what a “pristine” site actually looks like.

(R) Angela Whelpley – We will review the NVUM protocols and make sure we are using consistent terms.

(Q) Adam Barnett – What is the intent of the “publicly available recreation site (first line)”?

(R) Angela Whelpley – That is referring to all or any sites in the Upper Lee Vining Canyon.

(Q) Adam Barnett - In question 9, for “cross-country skiing”, is “backpacking and backcountry skiing” more appropriate?

(R) Courtney Rowe – I identify as backcountry or cross-country skier. Maybe we could use generic “skiing / snowboarding?”

(R) Adam Barnett - Making it more generic is okay.

(Q) Dannon Dirgo – Are there established over-snow vehicle (OSV) trails? Should we add snowmobiling?

(R) Shannon Luoma – There are no trails but there is known use of OSVs.

(R) Bartshe Miller – There is snowmobiling, it is infrequent though. Backcountry skiing, cross-country skiing, and snowboarding do happen. Add a note to acknowledge they are all possible.

Calibration Forms

Angela Whelpley summarized the purpose of the calibration forms. No stakeholder comments received.

6.0 OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

(Q) Angela Whelpley – During the last TWG we talked about Mono County’s construction efforts to pave Saddlebag Lake Road. Anyone have updates? No updates. We will follow up with the county.

(Q) Angela Whelpley – We would like to get concessionaire data and Special Use Permit data from 2023 so we can capture trends. Who do we get those from?

(R) Adam Barnett - I can get you campground data. The rest is probably from the district special use permit coordinator. I will follow up with them.

7.0 Q&A

Shannon Luoma summarized action items and asked if there were any other questions.

(Q) Bartshe Miller – Will you accept me as an interviewee for the creel survey?

(R) Angela Whelpley – Yes, of course.

(C) Dannon Dirgo – The forecast is predicting 70 inches of snow this weekend.

No further stakeholder comments or questions.

The Relicensing Team adjourned the meeting.

8.0 MEETING FOLLOW UP

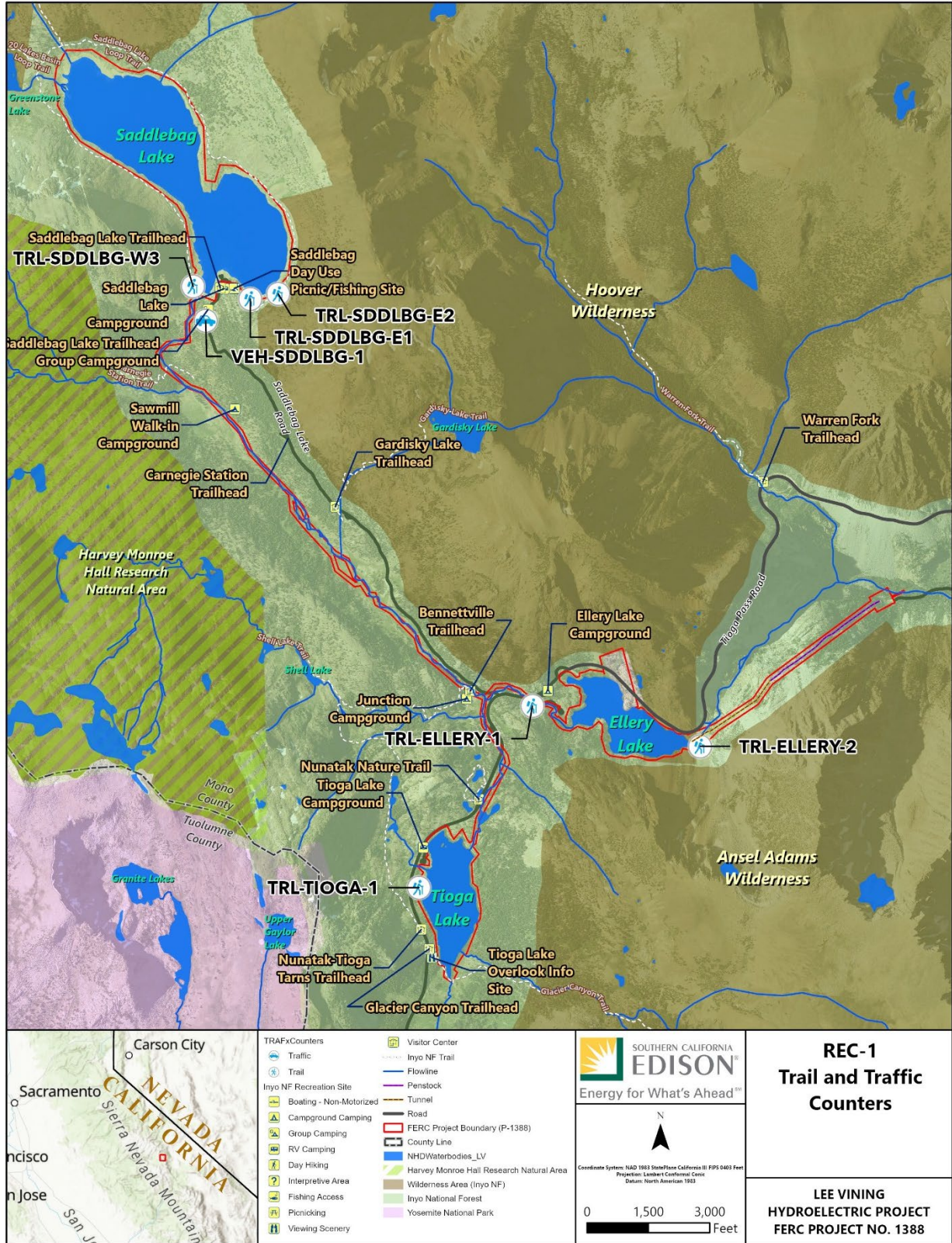
Following the February 28 meeting, the Relicensing Team met to review the topics and questions raised.

Completed action items:

- It was agreed that an additional trail counter would be installed on the west side of Saddlebag Dam (map included below). Past TWG notes were reviewed for discussion regarding proposed trail counter locations, but no such discussion was found.
- Per the Tioga Pass updates on the NPS Yosemite page, an update on plowing is anticipated April 15, 2024.
- Graham Meese (CDFW) confirmed with the CDFW fisheries supervisor that one photo of an angler's catch is enough for the creel survey data and a photo can be optional.
- The Relicensing Team reviewed USFS' terms in user monitoring survey protocols and made the questionnaire language consistent (e.g., "pristine site").
- The Relicensing Team made the winter recreation terms more generic to include backcountry skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing as potential uses.
- The Relicensing Team contacted Mono County to see when paving of Saddlebag Lake Road will occur; this is planned to start in 2028 so will not conflict with this years' survey.

Outstanding item:

- Adam Barnett (USFS) will get campground use data from 2023 and follow up with the special use permit coordinator to get data. Relicensing team requested this data from Adam on 4/1/2024.



2024 Trail and Traffic Counter Locations