

Action Name: (NPLAES1) Aesthetics Evaluation **Prerequisite Actions:** none

Action Description:

Provide information so that the effects of project facilities, current operations, and alternative operations on the project and adjacent lands can be assessed.

Applicable Hydro Projects/Developments:

Nantahala, East Fork, West Fork

I. Objective

Provide information so that the effects of any proposed modifications to project facilities or operations on the aesthetics of the project and adjacent lands in the viewshed can be assessed.

II. Basis

FERC requires applicants to address aesthetics issues in Exhibit E of the license application (18CFR4.51.f.6). The applicant must address aesthetics impacts resulting from any proposed alterations to the project or its operations.

III. Geographic and Temporal Scope

The geographic area of study will be the project itself, adjacent lands in the viewshed that are accessible by the public and other affected areas including reaches downstream of powerhouses and bypassed reaches.

IV. Approach and Analysis

- Identify representative viewpoints of project structures and affected landscapes. These viewpoints will be identified with input from NCDENR and the USFS.
- Identify any proposed modifications to project structures or operations that would be visible from these viewpoints.
- Document current conditions from viewpoints using either photographs or video. Documentation of each viewpoint will take place three times during the course of a year (leaf-off, summer and fall leaf season). Contrast and characterize current conditions with proposed modifications.
- Evaluate the setting in regard to recreational experience levels. This evaluation will be done in conjunction with the Recreation Use and Needs Survey and the Recreational Instream Flow Study.
- Evaluate the aesthetic setting in a regional context to determine its level of uniqueness.

Prior to initiating any aesthetics evaluations, previous aesthetics studies in the area will be reviewed.

Documentation of flows in by-passed reaches will coincide with flow releases resulting from the Recreational Instream Flow Study. The study survey that all participants will be required to complete will include questions on aesthetics. These questions will be provided in draft form to the Technical Leadership Team for review and comment. Questions will assess participants' overall visual impression, identify elements contributing to this impression, and recommendations for improving visual characteristics.

Documentation of lake levels will coincide with annual lake level fluctuations resulting from operation of the project in accordance with a rule curve. Views will be documented utilizing still photography during the summer recreational season, at peak drawdown and during the fall “leaf season.” Viewpoints will be identified by the TLT lead and provided to the TLT for review and comments.

The overall visual characteristics of the lakes, rivers and structures associated with the projects will be assessed as one component of the Recreation Use and Needs Survey. (See the Recreation Use and Needs Survey study plan for additional details) The aesthetics portion of the study survey will assess respondees’ overall visual impression of the project areas, factors influencing these perceptions and recommendations for improving visual characteristics. The survey will be provided to TLT members as a draft for review and comment.

Documentation and evaluation of current and alternative conditions that affect National Forest lands will be consistent with the USFS’s Visual Management System.

V. Schedules and Required Conditions

Duke Power will begin data collection in 2001 with the final report complete in 2002. 2001 activities include identification of viewpoints and documentation of views from these viewpoints under a variety of conditions.

VI. Results

The results of the aesthetics study will be utilized primarily as an additional consideration in evaluating proposed modifications to project operations.

VII. Participants

	Organization	Name	Phone #	E-Mail
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NP&L Supporting Consultant				

VIII.Expected Benefits

Project effects on the aesthetics of the area can affect the public’s enjoyment and appreciation of the area. As such, the aesthetic effects associated with any proposed modifications should be assessed as various alternatives are being evaluated.

IX. List of Attachments

X. List of References