

Appendix E
Fall Season Recreation Visitor Survey Results

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**Lewis River Hydroelectric Projects
FERC Nos. 2111, 2213, 2071, and 935**

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December 2000

FALL SEASON RECREATION VISITOR SURVEY

The Recreation Surveys (REC 3) consist of a group of 7 user count, visitor attitude, and other surveys to supplement similar surveys conducted in 1996 through 1998 in the vicinity of the projects. Combined with previous survey data for the project area, these surveys provide information on demand and use levels in the study area. These 7 recreation surveys, once completed, will be compiled into the Recreation Demand Analysis report (REC 4). This survey, the Fall Season Recreation Visitor Survey, is 1 of these 7 surveys. The survey was conducted in October 1999 during 3 weekend days. The results of this survey are presented below.

Study Objectives

The objectives of the Recreation Surveys (REC 3) are to answer key questions identified in the previous watershed scoping, assess existing demand and use levels, assess visitor attitudes and preferences, and assess perceptions of crowding.

Study Area

The study area for visitor surveys includes recreation facilities that were open in mid- to late-October 1999 at the 3 project reservoirs, and the Swift No. 2 project area and bypass reach.

Methods

The methods for this study are described on pages REC 3-3 to REC 3-6 of the Study Plan Document (PacifiCorp and Cowlitz PUD 1999a).

Study Results

During October 1999, a recreation survey was distributed to visitors at 8 sites in the Lewis River Valley. Both day and overnight visitors were surveyed in an attempt to learn more about the types of visitors in the fall and their activities.

The facilities included in the survey represented all project recreation sites that were open during October 1999, as well as nearby use areas that were thought to be popular in the fall due to the presence of hunters or anglers. Sites where surveys were distributed included:

- Merwin Park (day use)
- Speelyai Bay Park (day use)
- Yale Park (day use)
- Swift 2 bypass area (day/overnight use)
- IP Road gate/Lewis River bridge area (day/overnight use)
- Cowlitz PUD Power Canal area (day use)
- Eagle Cliff Park (day use)

- Swift Campground (day/overnight use)

Several factors influenced the location, number, and type of visitors present in the study area during the surveys. All 3 of the weekend days that were sampled were generally sunny with above normal temperatures, with the exception of one afternoon when clouds and light rain moved into the area. This good weather was positive for outdoor recreation visitation. Visitor use in the study area, however, may have been impacted by seasonal low pool levels at the reservoirs. In 1999, pool levels were particularly low because of ongoing research along reservoir shorelines, particularly Lake Merwin. These low pool levels caused many of the boat launches in the area to be unusable. Visitor use is typically low at this time; however, for visitors who do come to the study area, normal seasonal closures of facilities may make it hard to find an open campsite. Most of the day use facilities and Swift Campground were open throughout the survey period. One final factor that may have influenced visitor use of the study area was the opening of the modern firearm deer hunting season on October 16. Many hunters were observed in the area on that day, particularly in the Swift No. 2 bypass reach.

A total of 81 surveys were distributed with 27 completed surveys mailed back for a final response rate of 33 percent. Over half of the surveys were distributed at Swift Campground, accounting for the fact that the greatest number of completed surveys were received from visitors to this site. Table 1 indicates how many completed surveys were received from each of these sites.

Table 1. Survey responses by site.

Site	Number of responses	Percent of sample
Swift Campground	14	51.9
Swift 2 bypass area	5	18.5
Speelyai Bay Park	3	11.1
Yale Park	3	11.1
IP Road Gate/Lewis River bridge area	1	3.7
Swift 2 power canal area	1	3.7
Merwin Park	0	0.0
Eagle Cliff Park	0	0.0

Most of the respondents contacted at Swift Campground were camping there overnight since this was the only developed camping facility on the 3 reservoirs that was open. Some boaters were also contacted at this site because this was one of the few boat launches that provided access to the water due to low pool levels. All of the respondents contacted in the Swift No. 2 bypass area were hunters who were camping in the area.

Activity Participation

Visitors were asked to indicate what activities (from a list of 22) they participated in during their trip to the Lewis River area (more than one activity could be indicated).

Visitor results to this question are included in Table 2. The most popular activities among visitors were relaxation (41 percent) and sightseeing (37 percent). Many of those who indicated sightseeing included visitors who stopped at one of these sites to look around while traveling through the area en route to other destinations. One-third of all visitors were hunting while on their trip. Relatively few visitors participated in water-related activities, a result of low pool levels and the cool season. Activities noted by visitors in the “other” category included scuba diving, Boy Scout activities, and studying the area’s geology. These responses relate to 3 groups surveyed in the area.

Table 2. Most common activities indicated by visitors.

Activity in Which Respondents Participated	Percent
Relaxation	40.7
Sightseeing	37.0
Spending time with family	33.3
Hiking/walking	33.3
Hunting	33.3
RV camping	29.6
Tent camping	25.9
Fishing from shore	22.2
Fishing from boat	14.8
Caving/rock climbing	14.8
Other (see below)	11.1
Picnicking	7.4
Kayaking/canoeing/rowing/rafting/tubing	7.4
Powerboating	3.7
Water skiing	3.7
Jet skiing/personal watercraft use	3.7
Mountain/road biking	3.7
Nature study/photography	3.7
Backpacking	3.7
Sunbathing/swimming	0.0
Sailing	0.0
Windsurfing	0.0
Horseback riding	0.0

From this same list of activities, visitors were asked to indicate which was their main activity while on their trip. Table 3 indicates visitor responses to this question. Nearly half (48 percent) of all visitors indicated that their main activity while visiting the area was either hunting or fishing. “Other” activities were the primary activity of 11 percent of visitors, including scuba diving, Boy Scout activities, and studying area geology. Relatively few visitors (3) indicated any water-based activity other than fishing from a boat.

Table 3. Primary activities indicated by visitors.

Main activity	Percent
Hunting	25.9
Fishing from boat	11.1
Fishing from shore	11.1
Other (see above comments)	11.1
Tent camping	7.4
Kayaking/canoeing/rowing/rafting/tubing	7.4
Caving/rock climbing	7.4
Spending time with family	3.7
Relaxation	3.7
Picnicking	3.7
Mountain/road biking	3.7
Sightseeing	3.7
Sunbathing/swimming	0.0
Power boating	0.0
Water skiing	0.0
Jet skiing/personal watercraft use	0.0
RV camping	0.0
Hiking/walking	0.0
Sailing	0.0
Windsurfing	0.0
Backpacking	0.0
Nature study/photography	0.0
Horseback riding	0.0

While many of the visitors surveyed were RV camping and doing other activities, almost half (48 percent) identified hunting and fishing as their primary activities during their visit.

Overall Rating of the Area

Visitors were asked how they would rate the project reservoirs among similar areas that they used for recreation. Table 4 indicates that well over half (58 percent) of all visitors felt that this area was better than either most or all other similar areas that they used. None of the visitors indicated liking this area less than similar areas.

Table 4. Overall rating of the project reservoir areas.

I like the Merwin/Yale/Swift reservoir area...	Percent
Less than any other similar areas I use	0.0
Less than most other similar areas I use	0.0
About the same as most other similar areas I use	41.7
Better than most other similar areas I use	37.5
Better than any other similar areas I use	20.8

Visitor Perceptions of Crowding

Perceived crowding was assessed by asking visitors how crowded they felt during their visit to the area. Visitors could respond by indicating a crowding score on a scale from 1 (not at all crowded) to 7 (extremely crowded). Table 5 indicates the results from this question and reveals that most visitors did not feel crowded while visiting the area in October.

Table 5. Visitor perceptions of crowding in the Lewis River area.

Not at all crowded		Slightly crowded		Moderately crowded		Extremely crowded
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
74.1%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%

Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of the visitors surveyed did not feel crowded at all while visiting the area, with most of the remaining visitors only perceiving slight levels of crowding. These results reflect the lower intensity at which many of these sites are utilized during the fall recreation season. This low level of perceived crowding partially accounts for the fact that none of the visitors surveyed indicated having any complaints about or conflicts with other visitors.

Condition of Area Recreation Facilities and Potential Improvements Needed

Visitors were asked to rate the overall condition of area recreation facilities on a 5-point scale, from poor to excellent. Nearly 1 in 5 visitors (19 percent) rated the facilities as excellent, and one-third rated them as being in very good or good condition. Relatively small proportions of visitors felt that facilities were in fair (11 percent) or poor (4 percent) condition. Overall, just over half (52 percent) of the visitors surveyed rated the facilities as either good or excellent.

Although the above results indicate that not all visitors were entirely satisfied with the condition of recreation facilities, relatively few indicated any new or improved recreation facilities that they would like to see provided in the area. Three visitors would like year-round restrooms provided at Swift Campground, 1 visitor would like more boat launches to be accessible at low pool, and 1 visitor would like to see the RV dump station at Yale Lake re-opened.

Visitor Destinations While Visiting the Area and Annual Visitation

Results indicate that several fall season visitors traveled to more than 1 site while on their trip. Two out of 5 visitors (39 percent) were planning to visit recreation areas other than the one where they were contacted. Of those visitors who were visiting other sites (N = 10), several different locations were indicated and are shown in Table 6. Out of these 10 responses, the most popular destinations included the Monument and private timber land

in the Lewis River area. Those respondents visiting private timber lands were mostly hunters.

Table 6. Visitor destinations other than site contacted.

Destination	Percent
Mount St. Helens Nat. Vol. Mon., including Ape Cave and Lava Canyon (USFS)	30.0
Timber land in the Lewis River area (private)	30.0
Lake Merwin (PacifiCorp)	20.0
Lewis River area upstream of Swift Reservoir (USFS)	20.0
Lewis River area downstream of Merwin Dam (private)	20.0
Gifford Pinchot National Forest (USFS)	10.0
Swift Reservoir (PacifiCorp)	10.0
Swift 2 bypass reach (private)	10.0
Yale Lake (PacifiCorp)	0.0
Merrill Lake (DNR)	0.0
Siouxon lands (DNR)	0.0
RV Parks\Resorts (private)	0.0

Visitors were asked to indicate how often they visited areas near Merwin, Yale, and/or Swift reservoir each year. Table 7 indicates that nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the fall season visitors surveyed came to the area up to 5 times each year. Twenty percent came to the area more than 10 times each year.

Table 7. Frequency of visits to the project reservoir areas.

Response	Percent
Once per year	24.0
2 to 5 times per year	40.0
6 to 10 times per year	16.0
Over 10 times per year	20.0

Visitor Perception of New User Fees

Visitors were presented with the following statement: “In 1999, Pacific Power implemented a new user fee program at its day-use sites to help cover the increasing costs of maintenance at its facilities in the Merwin/Yale/Swift area. The fees included \$2 per vehicle plus \$3 per watercraft.” Visitors were then asked to indicate how these new fees would affect their visitation to the area. Table 8 indicates that just over half (52 percent) of the respondents did not feel that these fees would change their use of the area. However, one-third of the respondents would visit the area less than before and 11 percent would not visit the area any more due to the new user fees.

Table 8. Affect of new user fees on visitation.

Response	Percent
I'll visit the area more.	3.7
I'll visit the area the same amount.	51.9
I'll visit the area less.	33.3
I won't visit the area anymore.	11.1

A similar question asked visitors if they would be willing to pay an additional small fee for increased law enforcement and/or emergency response in the area. Visitors were evenly split on this question, with over one-quarter (27 percent) of respondents indicating they would not pay extra for these services, while just under one-quarter (23 percent) indicated that they would pay extra. Half of all respondents were not sure and indicated that “maybe” they would pay extra for increased services.

Attitudes and Characteristics of Campers

Ten (37 percent) respondents indicated that they had camped in a developed campground during their visit. These 10 respondents were then asked to answer a series of questions regarding their camping experience. Since Swift Campground was the only developed campground open at the time this survey was administered, all of the survey respondents were camping at this site.

Three-quarters of the campers surveyed did not have any difficulty finding an available campsite. The remaining one-quarter did have difficulty, however, this difficulty was in finding an open campground, not an open campsite. During this timeframe, all of the reservoir campgrounds were closed for the season except for Swift Campground, an annual occurrence.

When asked how often they visited this or other campgrounds in the Lewis River Valley, 80 percent of the campers surveyed visited up to 5 times each year. Only 10 percent of respondents visited the area more than 10 times annually (Table 9).

Table 9. Frequency of visits to the area by campers.

Frequency of Annual Visits	Percent
Once per year	40.0
2 to 5 times per year	40.0
6 to 10 times per year	10.0
Over 10 times per year	10.0

Campers at Swift Campground were also asked questions related to the group campsite reservation system and camping fees. As an alternative, one-third felt that the existing campsite reservation system should not be expanded to a portion of the individual campsites. Half of the respondents were unsure about this alternative action. About 17 percent of the respondents felt that the reservation system should be expanded.

Regarding camping fees, half of the respondents to this question felt that existing fees were “okay,” while the other half felt that these fees were “too high.”

Although not a major issue in the fall season (due to low pool levels), visitors were asked if boaters putting in or taking out their boats at the campground were a problem. The vast majority of respondents (88 percent) did not feel this was a problem, while the remaining visitors (12 percent) felt that this was only a slight problem.

Visitors to Swift Campground were also asked if there were any recreation facility or service improvements that they would like to see implemented at Merwin, Yale, or Swift reservoirs. Three-quarters of respondents indicated that they desired some improvements. Two respondents would like to see more showers, 2 respondents would like to see more drinking water available, and 1 respondent would like to see more bathrooms. Comments regarding showers and bathrooms may be explained in part by the seasonal closure of the bathrooms at Swift Campground (only portable toilets were provided). However, similar comments were received when full restroom/shower facilities were open during the summer season.

Visitors who were camping at Swift Campground were asked to rate how important a list of factors were to their selection of a campsite. Table 10 indicates the results of this question based on the 10 respondents who were contacted at Swift Campground. The factors most frequently rated as “very important” to campsite selection were the availability of drinking water (80 percent), the quality of restrooms and showers (50 percent), and adequate RV parking and pull-through space (40 percent). The availability of electrical hookups was rated as not important by 30 percent of visitors to developed campgrounds.

Table 10. Importance factors in campsite selection.

Campsite feature	Percent*				
	Not at all important		Important		Very important
Boat ramp is nearby	20.0	10.0	50.0	10.0	10.0
Other campsites are nearby	10.0	10.0	60.0	20.0	0.0
Camping within view of the lake	10.0	30.0	10.0	50.0	0.0
Quality of the surrounding scenery	10.0	0.0	20.0	70.0	0.0
Noise in the campground	10.0	0.0	20.0	40.0	30.0
Picnic facilities	0.0	0.0	44.4	55.6	0.0
Quality of restrooms and showers	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0
Availability of drinking water	10.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	80.0
Availability of electrical hookups	30.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	10.0
Convenient garbage cans and pickup	0.0	0.0	40.0	30.0	30.0
Adequate RV parking and pull-through space	0.0	0.0	50.0	10.0	40.0
Distance to swimming area	20.0	30.0	40.0	0.0	10.0
Availability of sewage dump station	20.0	20.0	20.0	10.0	30.0

* Totals equal 100 percent horizontally.

Visitors surveyed who did not camp in a developed campground, but rather in an undeveloped remote campsite, did not answer the questions presented above. However, dispersed campers were asked to indicate why they chose an undeveloped campsite rather than a developed one. In Table 11 (multiple responses were possible), the most popular reason for choosing an undeveloped campsite was to be farther away from other people. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of the respondents to this question indicated this reason. Over half (54 percent) of the respondents indicated that being closer to their hunting area was also an important reason for choosing an undeveloped campsite. This reflects the relatively large percentage of hunters who were included in this October survey. Undeveloped campsites were also preferred by almost half (46 percent) of the respondents because there is no fee and over one-quarter (27 percent) of respondents liked an undeveloped campsite because it is easier to prepare/dress game at this type of site.

Table 11. Reasons for camping in an undeveloped campsite.

Reason	Percent
Farther away from other people	72.7
Closer to my hunting area	54.5
No camping fee	45.5
Easier to prepare/dress game	27.3
The campground was full	0.0

Attitudes and Characteristics of Anglers

Visitors who were fishing while on their trip to this area were asked a series of questions related to this activity. Of the 27 visitors who completed a survey, 8 (30 percent) respondents indicated that they had gone fishing while on their trip. Even though pool levels were low during the survey period, only one-quarter of the anglers surveyed indicated that these pool levels affected their fishing experience. One comment was provided indicating that low pool levels made it easier to find a deep-water spot to fish. Anglers were also asked to indicate what type of fishing they had done while on their trip. Half of the anglers surveyed indicated that they went bank fishing or wading, while one-quarter of the anglers surveyed indicated that they went boat fishing. The remaining quarter of the anglers indicated both boat and bank fishing while on their trip.

Attitudes and Characteristics of Hunters

Although hunters are generally represented in camper responses, it is possible to compare those visitors who indicated hunting as an activity while on their trip to those who did not go hunting. One third of the visitors surveyed indicated that they were hunting while on their trip. A higher percentage of hunters were likely in the area, but did not mail back a completed survey form. Most of the responding hunters were from the local area; two-thirds from the Woodland area, while one-third were from the Vancouver area. Overall, hunters were similar to non-hunters on many of the survey questions; however, those questions in which there were differences are described herein. Eight of the 9 hunters (89 percent) surveyed indicated that they were RV camping while on their trip, and two-

thirds (66 percent) of the hunters indicated that they were camping at an undeveloped site. Both of these values are considerably higher than other respondents who did not indicate hunting as an activity. When asked why they preferred undeveloped camping areas, a majority (56 percent) of hunters indicated that it was because these areas were closer to their hunting area. Less than half (44 percent) of the hunters surveyed preferred these areas because there was no camping fee. One-third of the hunters surveyed liked the fact that these areas were farther from other people, and that it was easier to prepare/dress their game (i.e., less concern for cleaning up a mess).

The preference of most hunters for undeveloped camping areas and no or low fees corresponds well with a related result that two-thirds (66 percent) of those hunting will likely visit the area less, or not at all, in the future due to new user fees. It is apparent that many hunters in the area may be unaware that the new user fees only applied to day-use areas. Campground fees were not increased in 1999, but were increased in 1998. Interestingly, many (44 percent) of the hunters in this survey also felt that the facilities in the area were only in fair to poor condition, yet all of the hunters liked the Merwin/Yale/Swift area as much or more than other similar areas. These responses indicate that most hunters prefer the area in general (i.e., undeveloped areas) compared to other similar areas. Hunters will also likely to continue to use the undeveloped Swift No. 2 bypass area, or other similar undeveloped areas, in the future compared to the Swift Campground.

Attitudes and Characteristics of Boaters

A specific section of the survey was also included for those visitors who had been boating while on their trip. Just over one-quarter (26 percent) of survey respondents indicated having gone boating while on their trip. Half of these respondents indicated that the low reservoir pool levels caused boating problems during their visit; however, no specific problems were cited by boaters. Boaters were also asked to indicate how important several components of their boating experience were to the quality of their boating experience (Table 12). Overall, the number of other watercraft, the speed of these other watercraft, and the waiting time at the boat launch did not appear to be important components. The pool level of the reservoir was slightly more important; however, none of the respondents felt that this was a “very important” component of their visit.

Table 12. Importance of selected water recreation components.

Water recreation component	Percent				
	Not at all important	Important			Very important
Number of other watercraft	71.4	14.3	0.0	14.3	0.0
Speed of other watercraft	71.4	0.0	14.3	14.3	0.0
Waiting time at boat ramp	71.4	14.3	0.0	14.3	0.0
Water level of lake	28.6	28.6	14.3	28.6	0.0

Several other questions further evaluated the experience of boaters to the area in the fall season. None of the boaters surveyed had to wait to use a boat launch while on their trip. The majority (80 percent) of boaters surveyed indicated that they went ashore while on their boating trip. Table 13 indicates the activities these boaters participated in while ashore. All of the boaters went hiking or walking, while two-thirds were picnicking or bank fishing.

Table 13. On-shore activities of boaters.

Onshore Activity	Percent
Hiking/walking	100.0
Picnicking	66.6
Bank fishing	66.6
Use of toilets/restrooms	33.3
Swimming/sunbathing	0.0

Fall Survey Visitor Demographics

The final section of the survey asked all of the respondents several general demographic questions. Visitors surveyed in October had an average group size of just over 7 people. A majority of the respondents were male (58 percent) with an average age of 43 years. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents surveyed were over the age of 40 years. The majority of these visitors (62 percent) were from either the Longview-Kelso-Woodland area, or from the Vancouver area (Table 14). Only a small percent (4 percent) were from outside of the Oregon or Washington areas.

Table 14. Visitor location of residence.

City/area	Percent
Longview – Kelso - Woodland, WA	34.6
Vancouver, WA	26.9
Portland, Oregon metropolitan area	19.2
Non-Seattle, Washington	7.7
Non-Portland, Oregon	7.7
Outside Washington & Oregon	3.9
Seattle metro area	0.0