

SUMMARY



Geographic Response Strategy Development- Moosehead Lake Region (ME)

Initial Work Group/ Site Selection Meeting

Tuesday, November 14, 2023: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Held via Zoom Video Conference

Purpose

This meeting served both to introduce this project, and to review the preliminary Site Selection Matrix, examine candidate sites, develop additional information about resources at risk, spill threat, and site accessibility at each site, and select ten (10) sites for GRS development within the designated Moosehead Lake project region. We also discussed other planned project activities including conduct of site surveys, tactics development, and final GRS development.

Participants

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| Karen Way, Ila White – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | Charlie “Chuck” Loring Jr., Dan Kusnierz, Sean O’Brien – Penobscot Nation |
| Brian Altvater Jr. – Passamaquoddy Tribe | Mike Popovich, Haley Griffin – Nuka Research |
| Don Katnik – Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife | Tammy Barker, Michael “Mike” Smith – Somerset County Emergency Management Agency |
| Genevieve Trafelet – Maine Land Use Planning Commission Greenville | Ann Hemenway, Maine Department of Environmental Protection |
| | Lucas Talpey – Jackman Utility District |

Intro and Opening Comments

Mike Popovich (Nuka Research) opened the discussion by thanking the participants for attending the site selection meeting and reiterating that this meeting is a crucial part of the process as the group will decide where the GRS will be developed on and around Moosehead Lake.

Project/Site Selection Process Overview

Mike provided a general project overview, reviewed project objectives, and provided an overview of GRS design and content. He also discussed the different variables that were relevant to the sites, including sensitive habitats, historical sites, conservation areas, and spill risk. Mike then introduced Karen Way, the project coordinator for EPA Region 1, to the group. She thanked the participants for attending and highlighted the fact that the train derailment that occurred near Little Brassua Lake was the impetus for GRS development in the Moosehead Lake Region.

Mike then took the opportunity to share with the group that these projects do not include the procurement of oil spill response equipment, only the development of GRS. He added that once the GRS are developed, those interested in procuring oil spill response equipment should consider using the existence of these GRS to justify the procurement of equipment through various funding avenues.

Finally, Mike reviewed the project’s stages and timeline.

Inland GRS and the Inland ACP

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Karen Way gave a brief presentation on the history of contingency planning since the passage of the Clean Water Act and OPA 90 and how these GRS integrate into the larger Inland Area Contingency Plan (ACP). She stated that the GRS created in the Moosehead Lake Region will be included in the Inland ACP and available for viewing and download at the [RRT website](#).

Penobscot Nation Interests & Project Goals

Chuck Loring Jr., a member of the Penobscot Nation outlined the significance of the Moosehead Lake Region to the Penobscot Nation, reviewing the history of the Wabanaki People's presence in the area. He also shared a story of the origins of the geographical features of the region.

Geographic Response Strategies

Mike provided an overview of the GRS template, structure, and content. He gave an example of how oil spills could impact this region in particular (i.e., a train derailment). Mike touched on the definition of GRS and the differences in what a GRS is versus what it is not, including that GRS are not a mandate for protection or response, a performance standard, nor the only sites that will or should be protected during an incident. GRS are smaller, site-specific documents which differentiate from the larger and more comprehensive ACPs of which they are a part.

Review of Site Selection Criteria and Site Selection Discussion

Before beginning review of the preliminary selected sites, Mike indicated that any areas chosen for development that turn out to be larger than what is allowed by contract for mapping (mapping areas no more than a mile in length) can be developed as single, multi-map GRS. Throughout the site selection discussion, Mike provided examples of the kinds of data utilized when choosing prospective GRS sites (e.g., endangered, threatened, and special concern wildlife habitat, wildlife management areas, etc.). He also acknowledged the existence of Passamaquoddy Trust land within the project area.

The following list includes all preliminary site areas that were discussed during the meeting and any additional feedback and corrections received by meeting attendees immediately following the meeting. Site names in **bold text** will be the primary focus for potential GRS development though other areas may be surveyed based on any further work group discussion and feedback that occurs between the meeting date and conduct of the site surveys. Based on the results of the site surveys and further discussion with work group and site survey team members, up to 10 site areas will be identified for final GRS development.

Moosehead Lake Region Sites: *NOTE: All current GRS names are tentative and subject to change up to the conclusion of the final workgroup meeting.*

Dan Kusnierz (Penobscot Nation) commented that two useful considerations are thinking about the extent to which a spill in a particular area can have impacts on a much larger area, how accessible a site is, and if responders will be able to contain an incident within a certain amount of time. He stated that the East Outlet River coming out of the Moosehead Lake is a flowing river and that access is somewhat limited to the area. It is very unlikely a boat will be utilized in these conditions. He expressed that since the river flows down into the Kennebec River, creating a GRS on the northern end of East Outlet River could help slow or prevent the movement of oil before it reaches downstream into Indian Pond.

Greenville - Greenville Junction – No comments during site selection meeting. *NOTE: Based on results of FRA historical derailment data research conducted after the site selection meeting (see "SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION" below), this area should be considered for GRS development.*

East Outlet Dam – Dan stated that the Kennebec River East Outlet Public access "boat launch" acts more as a place to put smaller, nonmotorized boats into the water. It may be difficult to deploy boom here due to faster currents, but there is a bridge where boom can be tied off on and carried over to the other side for shoreside anchoring and oil recovery. This site can be a useful staging area if the shorelines will be utilized, and with the Dam right there, less water can be let through during an incident. Chuck added that this area can be used to deploy drift boats. The headwaters of the Kennebec River begin in Moosehead Lake and flow through both the East and West Outlets.

Mike asked participants if there have been any cases of fuel truck rollovers in the region, and Ann Hemenway (ME DEP) offered to look into the DEP's records.

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Indian Pond North – Dan stated that there was good access here and that the presence of many small islands can be utilized for diverting oil to a shoreside for recovery.

Rockwood/Moose River East – Dan stated that the area where Moose River connects with Moosehead Lake has some good access points and it will be helpful to develop a strategy to stop the oil from moving out of Brassua Lake. Moose River flows west to east into Moosehead Lake. Mike suggested that the group can survey the entire Moose River to choose the best area for deploying tactics in between the Brassua Lake Dam and head of the Moose River. Don Katnik (ME IF&W) added that it could be helpful for the group to focus on where the best places are to deploy tactics versus focusing on where the resources are that need to be protected.

Indian Pond South/Harris Station Dam – Mike pointed out to the group that even if there are local resources available, there still may be significant delays in the response due to the lack of roads to access many of these locations.

Misery Stream – Mike stated that this site was proposed because of the stream connecting to Brassua Lake and the presence of the Brookfield Energy public boat ramp. No group members had objections to selecting this site for GRS development.

Long Pond – Ann stated that the rail line runs along the entirety of Long Pond and that there may be fuel storage facilities in close proximity to the water and some roads in the area that can be used for access. Mike added that boat access was not found on Long Pond.

Jackman - Wood Pond – Lucas Talpey (Jackman Utility District) pointed out the location of a surface water intake in the Jackman Wood Pond and offered to send more information to Mike on the water intake area and how it changes throughout the seasons. He stated that other than in Jackman itself, there are not many roads for access throughout this area.

Ann asked if riding the rail to these more remote areas was possible, because the rail line is the only access route to some of these sites. She reiterated that the biggest concern in this area is train derailments and suggested that the railway company, Canadian Pacific Railway, be added and involved in this work group to possibly provide access to these sites.

Jackman Thompson Brook – Mike stated to the group that this site and the “Jackman Wood Pond” area can be combined into one site called “Jackman”. The train runs along Attean Pond and Mike sought clarification as to general flow within Attean Pond. Lucas replied that Attean flows into Thompson Brook and subsequently into Wood Pond.

Holeb Pond – Ann stated that with the rail line running along this pond, this area would be beneficial to choose for GRS development.

Passamaquoddy Trust Land – Brian Altvater Jr. (Passamaquoddy Tribe) stated that there are trails and access points within the trust land, and that if the Tribe is interested in having a GRS developed here, they will be able to provide some access. Karen added that since it is a large area and access is an issue, there could be a general GRS developed showing the direction of flow in the river, flow rates at different times of the year and other information that can generally inform responders on how the river acts.

Dan stated there is rail line located on relatively long, inaccessible areas throughout the region and there needs to be a strategy to stop oil from leaving a smaller area. Ann added that it can be difficult to have one strategy that covers a large area, and sometimes the area where an incident occurs needs to be evaluated when the incident takes place. Don concurred, stating that forming GRS for entire lakes doesn't help when an incident happens in another area and there are sensitive resources that weren't previously considered. Mike suggested that a GRS could be developed that calls out incident-specific booming strategies.

Don stated that the group needs to look at locations where the trains are most likely to derail, keeping in mind that stream crossings are a weak point in the rail line. Mike concurred that vulnerable areas in the rail line should be identified, and Ann suggested the group ask the rail company for information on where small stream crossings or wet or marshy areas are along the rail line. Chuck added that the Department of Transportation may also be able to provide this information and the train company should be involved in the work group.

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Note: For each GRS developed, a site name and numbering convention is used. As indicated above, site names can be determined by workgroup members as late as the final GRS review meeting at the end of the project. Since the inception of these inland river GRS development project series, GRS have also been given a unique letter/number identifier consisting of a two-letter river designator and a two-digit sequential number for each GRS. More information regarding GRS numbering will be provided later in this project as the site areas are finalized.

GRS Development Process & Project Timeline

Following the site selection discussion, Mike Popovich reviewed the remainder of the project timeline including the site survey process, follow-up on tactics development, GRS draft development, and final GRS review and approval by the work group. He reiterated that site surveys gather information on sensitive areas, shoreline types, current flow, accessibility, and other factors that may influence tactic development. Mike concluded by stressing the importance of continued local stakeholder participation and how critical local knowledge and input is to the entire GRS development process.

Comments and Suggestions

Mike and Karen both thanked everyone for their time and expressed their appreciation for the participants' willingness to contribute to the meeting. They asked for the group members to provide any additional information that may be informative to the work group and GRS development process.

Review Action Items

Nuka Research will:

- Disseminate the meeting summary to the meeting participants for review, then to the entire work group and project website.
- Conduct outreach to the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Department of Transportation (Federal Railroad Administration) to obtain information on past rail incidents and potential weak spots along the rail line that may impact the stability of the rail itself.

Adjourn

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION: *Based on the group discussion during the site selection meeting held on November 14th, Nuka Research conducted some research (utilizing available Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) data) looking into rail incidents along the Moosehead Subdivision (Moosehead Sub) which is the rail subdivision that runs through our development area. It starts in Brownville Junction, ME and runs through the Moosehead Lake region to Lac-Megantic, Quebec (117 miles). Based on separate FRA reporting data sets for Canadian Pacific Railway and Central Maine & Quebec Railway (as the "reporting" railroad), between 1978 and 2023 11 incidents have occurred along the portion of the Moosehead Sub from Greenville, ME at the southern tip of the lake, to the Canadian border. 10 of these incidents were derailments and 1 was a side collision.*

Nuka Research also plotted these incident locations on the linked Google My Maps page. Keep in mind that these locations are approximate (but close) to the exact location as we had to use a PDF map of the rail line that included mile markers and estimate the mile marker location of each incident based on the FRA reporting database which includes specific mile marker locations for each incident.

We also researched and plotted locations where there appears to be small streams or water features that cross under or directly abut the rail line. These locations don't include potential lowland areas where snow melt accumulation and/or flooding might occur and cause washouts (the site of the 2023 derailment doesn't appear to include any specific water features but does appear to be a lowland area topographically).

This information can inform GRS site selection and, in some cases, (like along Long Pond and around Greenville), supports site development in these areas.

Google My Maps Moosehead Sub Train Incident Locations:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=10fzWCjof6rmFRoWv3p08tQLzNAmU7X0&ll=45.62626357491587%2C-69.92140484068553&z=16>

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Project Website: <https://www.inlandgrpne.com/maine-grs>

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