

Dam Seen As Aid To L-C Highway

Two members of the roads and highways committee of the Lewiston Chamber of Commerce and a director of the Inland Empire Waterways Association last night said construction by private utilities of a dam at Penny Cliffs might aid the Lewis-Clark Highway.

J. C. Jeppson, chairman of the roads and highways committee; Elbert Stellmon, member of the committee, and J. W. Shepard, a director of the waterways association, all said the chances appeared good that such a dam would aid the highway.

They were commenting on a request by five Northwest power firms to check into the possibilities of private power developments at Bruce Eddy and Penny Cliffs damsites. The latter would be on the Middle Fork of the Clearwater River above Kooskia.

Would Cover Road

"It was brought out at the Orofino meeting that Penny Cliffs dam would back up the water to where the (Lewis-Clark) highway would have to be razed," Shepard said. "It was the supposition that access roads would have to be built and we might have a chance to get the highway quicker. However, others said we can hope that the highway will be built before the dam is."

Shepard said he had been informed by an official of the Army Engineers that the government always builds as good or better new roads in cases where it is necessary to inundate a road through dam construction. He said that had been true in all cases where highways were destroyed.

"It is my assumption," he said, "that if a private utility went in and destroyed or inundated the road we planned on they would assist in rebuilding it for us. I suppose if the government gave them authority to go in they would see that the private utility gave us the same protection the government does. I think they would be required to give us that protection."

Pointing out that he was considering the proposal "strictly from the highway point of view," Jeppson stated that "I don't think it matters who builds the dam. I don't think it would hurt the highway and it probably would make it more scenic. It might help get the highway finished sooner."

Highway Before Dam?

Stellmon said that as he understood the program, construction of a dam at Penny Cliffs would require the highway to be relocated, adding that the highway might be completed before the dam is.

"I feel that a reservoir behind the dam would be quite a tourist attraction as well as an ideal place for the development of very fine fishing," he said.

"The reservoir would back up to the mouth of Fish Creek and the major part of the road that would be covered by the reservoir is not a full width highway anyway—it is an 18-foot gravel road. If they relocate and rebuild it, it probably will be a 26-foot road and a very fine highway. I think that would have to be done no matter who builds the dam."