

Wildlife Officials Testify On Hells Canyon Projects

WASHINGTON # — Spokesmen for two federal agencies said Thursday the Idaho Power company three-dam plan for the Snake river has more possibilities for hunting and fishing than the proposed federal Hells Canyon project.

But they said there would be little difference in possibilities for other types of recreation between the two plans.

Their views were voiced at a Power commission hearing on Idaho Power's applications for licenses to build three power dams by James T. McBroom, coordinator, Office of River Basin Studies, Fish and Wildlife service and Ben H. Thompson, recreation planning division chief, National Park service.

McBroom said the three-dam plan would afford "slightly better recreational opportunities for hunting and fishing" because two of the three proposed reservoirs would maintain relatively stable water levels and would "destroy somewhat less deer habitat."

Protective Measures

McBroom added, however: "The worth to the hunter and fisherman of any of the plans will depend largely on the measures provided for protection and management of the fish and wildlife resources and in particular upon access provided to the fishing areas in the reservoir basins."

He said any dam in the Hells Canyon area would have adverse effects on the movement of salmon which spawn in the Snake river.

Hearing Examiner William J. Costello asked whether the Fish and Wildlife service had given any consideration to the feasibility of building ladders to carry the fish over the dams.

"They are not considered feasible in a sense that no stretch of a river ever has been successfully laddered at those heights of the proposed dams," McBroom replied.

Sights Recreation Center

Thompson said in his statement:

"... No matter what type of dams are built in this section of the Snake river, once reasonably good access is provided it will become an integral recreation attraction to the region and to the nation as a whole.

"It is the hope of the National Park service, therefore, that whatever development is undertaken will provide for suitable public access to appropriate sections of the canyon and reservoir area and to accomplish this a recreation master plan be developed as an integral part of the project."

Thompson said there "is probably little difference" between the projects, "insofar as recreation is concerned and a desirable recreation plan could be developed in either case."

He said operation of the big federal reservoir, with unstable water levels, would make the federal project less desirable for most types of boating, swimming and general waterside developments.

But, he testified, the larger federal dam would attract more tourists and would have certain other advantages.

One Portion Deleted

R. P. Parry, Idaho Power attorney, objected to a portion of Thompson's statement relating to the proposed Glacier View dam in Montana, and the portion was deleted.

Thompson said he understood that if the federal Hells Canyon dam is not built there will be an increase in "pressure" to construct Glacier View in Columbia river headwaters for flood control downstream.

The park service, he said, is against Glacier View because it would flood 20,000 acres of land in Glacier National park, including some big game grazing areas.

McBroom and Thompson were called to testify by John C. Mason, Power commission attorney. They said their statements were authorized by the fish and wildlife and park services.

Crandall Questioned

Lucien Hulmer, attorney for groups advocating the federal Hells Canyon dams, questioned whether Lynn Crandall, Idaho Falls engineer, overestimated future expansion of irrigation along the Snake river in a water depletion report he made for the Interior department.

Crandall holds three positions simultaneously. He's district engineer for the U. S. Geological survey, Snake river watermaster and deputy Idaho reclamation engineer. The latter two are state jobs.

Holmer challenged Crandall's estimate that 1,300,000 acres of new land will be irrigated in Idaho during the next 50 years.

Questioning brought out that Crandall earlier had estimated the total would be 1,700,000 acres, but added 130,000 acres after talking with other geological survey engineers.

Crandall said the 130,000 acres would consist largely of land to be irrigated by ground-water pumping.

Pressed as to whether he considered the 1,300,000-acre figure "possible or probable," Crandall said he would doubt that the acreage would exceed the figure at the end of the 50-year pay-out period for the proposed federal dam.

He said 1,100,000 acres might be considered "more probable," and added that uncertainties affecting future development are so great that "nothing can be gained by quibbling over 200,000 acres."