

2 CLEARWATER DAMS 'BUCKED'

Criticized From Standpoint of Fish Conservation

WASHINGTON, Feb. 10. (AP)—The federal fish and wildlife service may recommend against construction of two proposed dams in the Clearwater river in Idaho because they would block the migration of salmon, testimony at the Hells Canyon hearing indicated today.

James McBroom, coordinator of the fish and wildlife service's office of river basin studies, said the service has taken a tentative position, on the basis of a preliminary investigation, that Penny Cliffs and Bruces Eddy dams should not be built from a standpoint of fish conservation.

McBroom testified at the power commission hearing on applications by Idaho Power company to build three dams in the Snake river between Idaho and Oregon, where the federal Hells Canyon project has been proposed.

Will Be Reviewed

During discussion of how Hells Canyon dams would affect the runs of migrating salmon in the Snake river, McBroom was asked to summarize preliminary studies the service made on the effect on fish of proposed dams in the Clearwater, a tributary of the Snake.

"From the standpoint of fish and wildlife conservation we have reached a preliminary conclusion that we would prefer that the dams on the Clearwater not be built, subject to consideration by the department of all other values involved," McBroom said.

McBroom said later that the matter has not yet been reviewed officially by the interior department "at secretarial level" and the department will announce final position.

Five private power companies in the Northwest recently asked the power commission for a preliminary permit for power plants at Penny Cliffs in the Clearwater's middle fork and Bruces Eddy in the north fork.

A preliminary permit would give the applicants priority in filing for construction licenses.

Army engineers also have investigated the two sites.

Testimony Challenged

During cross-examination of McBroom, Lucien Hilmer, attorney for groups favoring the federal Hells Canyon dam, challenged his testimony that Idaho Power's three-dam plan would afford slightly better hunting and fishing opportunities than the proposed federal project.

McBroom said operation of the big proposed federal reservoir would cause fluctuation in the water level, which would discourage fishing. Small reservoirs in two of Idaho Power's projects would have relatively stable levels, he said.

Fishing in tailwaters of the smaller dams would be better than below the federal project and the large reservoir would flood more game habitat than the smaller reservoirs, he testified.

Hilmer asked the witness what steps could be taken to solve fish problems in the Hells Canyon area, noting that \$5,000,000 would be provided for fish facilities under the one-dam plan.

McBroom said the fish and wildlife service has made no recommendation and further investigation would have to be conducted.