Palisades faces fund problems

Post-Register. Oct 6, 1982

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

The question of whether enlarging Palisades Dam is possible will depend on funding, U.S. Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, said Wednesday.

McClure, in a telephone interview from his Washington office, expressed doubt whether the federal funding can be obtained in the next session of Congress in the face of an economy drive.

"If this is the case and we don't get federal funding, then we must go back and try to reinstitute the project though the Idaho Department of Water Resources," said McClure, chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Resources Committee.

U.S.Sen. James A. McClure

McClure noted the bill authorizing the project has passed the Senate but is languishing in a House committee.

"I'm doubtful about the funding," said McClure. "We don't know what we will have in the budget for fiscal 1984 which we will get in January when the new Congress opens.

"We will have this project one way or another. We need the power in spite of what many people say that we have a surplus of power. This is nonsense."

He noted the Senate last year passed an authorization for a project to add 90 megawatts of generating capacity at the 119-megawatt hydropower plants on the Snake River about 50 miles east of Idaho falls. The estimated cost of the project last year was placed at about $65 million but inflation could place this at much more now, McClure noted.

Under the multiple approach, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will design and operate the project and the Idaho Water Resources Board will pay for it with revenue bonds. The two agencies are working on a memorandum of understanding listing what issues need to be addressed in a state-federal contract. Legislation authorizing the federal-state concept was passed in the 1980 Idaho Legislature.

McClure said a new bill will need to be introduced in the new Congress but what form it will take will depend on the federal funding possibilities.