

McClure predicts solid future at INEL

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, Tuesday predicted a solid future for the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory. Although some projects could end, he said, these would probably be replaced by other programs.

In a telephone interview with The Post-Register from his Washington office, McClure said "there will be no dramatic down draft. There could be some reactors shut down but others, and maybe larger ones, will take their place."

"The future at the INEL looks good," McClure said.

He said, for example, that when the old Materials Test Reactor closed it was viewed as a disaster, but it was relaced by even larger programs.

"I think the same thing will continue in the future," McClure said.

He said the Loss of Fluid Test program has been rumored as being about to close down.

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"However," said McClure, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, "it now looks like it will be extended through 1983 as result of action taken by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission because it wants the research capability to feed in on various nuclear breeder programs."

McClure said much of the INEL future will hinge on what is finally decided for the Clinch River Breeder Reactor in Tennessee.

He said President Carter had marked this project for the ashcan, but President Reagan has placed it on a priority nuclear list.

He said if the Clinch River Breeder Reactor is built, then it is probable any large reactor eyed for the INEL would be delayed.

"It is a matter of economics," said McClure, "how much money can we spend to justify such programs?"

He said the plan to go ahead with the Clinch River breeder would then place a damper on the proposed

fast breeder reactor which is mentioned for the INEL and which would cost several billion dollars.

McClure said that in his estimation there is a 50-50 chance the Clinch River facility will win approval. He said the House Science and Technology Committee voted 21-19 just recently against the Clinch River breeder at this time.

"I think on budgetary matters, we may see some things scaled back but no major and drastic changes," he said.

He said there are some reductions in store for alcohol fuels, hydropower and geothermal energy programs.

He said they could mean a cutback of 350-400 employees, but there are still 10,000 employed at INEL.

McClure said there are dozens of technical programs on the drawing board and many of these likely will go to the INEL to "give an opportunity for maintenance and expansion."

Palisades power measure is waiting amendments

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

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U.S. Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said the long-delayed Palisades Dam power hydroelectric bill is awaiting addition from two states.

McClure said in a telephone interview with The Post-Register that Nevada and Montana want to add their own hydroelectric proposals to a bill which is considered unique in Congress.

"We are holding up the bill until this is done," said McClure.

The bill passed the Senate committee in May, along with other legislation embraced in the Hydroelectric Powerplant Construction Act.

McClure added an amendment which authorizes construction of an additional 90 megawatts of generated capacity at the existing Palisades Dam on the Snake River's South Fork, 50 miles east of Idaho Falls.

The additional generation would cost an estimated \$65 million and produce an additional power for the Bonneville Power Administration grid serving the Pacific Northwest.

The project has been under consideration since approved by the Idaho Legislature two years ago to cooperate with the federal government.

The bill provides for floating state revenue bonds that could be retired by sale of power. At

the time of Legislature approval, it was figured \$50 million in revenue bonds would be necessary.

The project has been delayed the last two years to reach an agreement with the American Public Power Association which represents the Rural Electrification Associations. The APPA has objected to a state-financed project and wants preference clauses for public utilities and federal projects. Under the proposal the Palisades power plant would be expanded from the present 90 megawatts.

Also added to the bill is an amendment authorizing \$60 million for construction of an additional 30 megawatts at Minidoka Dam and a \$13 million construction project for an additional 30 megawatts at Anderson Ranch Dam east of Boise.

McClure noted these projects will return more than their construction cost while the public will benefit from additional comparatively cheap power.

It would created little adverse environmental effect as there are existing dams, noted McClure.

McClure said that all the projects are currently owned and operated by the federal government. He added the appropriations would still be necessary before any construction of the new generating facilities could begin.