Palisades project studied

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Sen. Jim McClure, R-Idaho, said here Friday the long discussed Palisades hydroelectric project will probably become a purely federal project.

In a Post-Register interview while here to attend the East Idaho Republican Barbecue and Rally, McClure said it appears the original role of the state floating revenue bonds for installation of additional hydroelectric generators seems to be changing.

"The question of federal and state particpation must be settled before we can go ahead," said McClure.

The original proposal approved by the Idaho Legislature provided for floating state revenue bonds that could be retired by the sale of power. At that time, it was figured $50 million in revneue bonds would be necessary.

Under the plan, an additional 90 megawatts of generated capacity would be added to existing 90 megawatts at Palisades Dam on the Snake River's South Fork about 50 miles east of Idaho Falls.

The state, under its plan, wants the federal government to built the additional facilities and operate them but would have the voice in distribution.

McClure said there is an advantage in federal supervision because the new generators would be more efficient than the existing ones, the cooperative agreements necessary for Bonneville Power Administration power distribution, and other factors.

"We will study all the various alternatives to see what plan we can go ahead with," said McClure, who emphasized he is not committed to any particular venture.

As chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, McClure will have a strong voice in deteriming the concept of the project.

The project has been delayed the last two years to reach an agreement with the American Public Power Association which represents the Rural Electrification Association. The APPA has objected to a state-financed project and wants preference clauses for public utilities and federal projects.

Also proposed addition is an amendment authorizing $60 million for construction of additional 30 megawatts at Minidoka Dam and $13 million for construction of additional generators at Anderson Dam.

McClure noted the great dam-building era of the first 60 years in this century are about over with. Additional dams are considered but they must be justified. Dam constructions has been at a standstill for the last seven years.

He said, for example, the collapsed Teton Dam can be rebuilt but it must have the unified support of people of the area.

"I have been getting some signals that are not unmixed," said McClure, in referring to support for the project.

He noted such a dam would need extensive study on cost ratio, enviroment and its multiple use for power, fish and game, recreation, and irrigation.

"I am convinced it can be built but it will need lots of telchnical study," he said, indicating if such a project is considered it would be several years away.