



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release NOVEMBER 22, 1960

INTERIOR RECOMMENDS AGAINST IMMEDIATE POWER LICENSE ON MIDDLE SNAKE

The Department of the Interior has advised the Federal Power Commission that it is unnecessary for a power development at either the Mountain Sheep or Nez Perce sites on the Middle Snake River to be undertaken at the present time and for some years to come.

In a letter signed by Acting Secretary Elmer F. Bennett, the Department pointed out that the proposed Columbia River treaty with Canada will permit other major hydropower development on the Columbia River system and hence the proposed Middle Snake projects can be delayed pending further efforts to resolve the fishery problem.

The Department's letter calls attention to the White House statement of October 19 announcing President Eisenhower's approval of the proposals on Canadian storage which have been agreed to between the United States and Canadian negotiators. The White House statement said,

"Due to the location of this proposed storage, there will be no interference with the cycle for salmon and other anadromous fish, which constitute such an important and recreational asset for the people of the Pacific Northwest.

"The large block of flood control storage and power that will be realized over the next decade as a result of this cooperative undertaking affords us a greater degree of selectivity in the planning and timing of potential domestic projects in order to take into fullest consideration conservation as well as purely economic needs. Sorely needed time will be gained which can be devoted to the research and study which must go into the solution of the problem, particularly pressing today in our northwest States, of harmonizing construction of large storage dams with fish and wildlife needs. In this way the agreement can make a maximum contribution to the fostering of conservation in its highest sense, the optimum harmonization of our multipurpose needs."

The Snake and Salmon rivers are of critical importance in maintaining the salmon fishery resources of the Columbia River system and a high dam at either Mountain Sheep or Nez Perce sites would drastically affect both upstream migration of the anadromous fish to spawn and the return of young fish to the sea.

The Department pointed out that as between the two proposed Snake River dams, the Nez Perce project, which would be located below the confluence of the Snake and Salmon rivers would have the greater impact on anadromous fish. However, the Department recommends that project construction at either site be deferred while full advantage is taken of the opportunity for storage and hydrodevelopment presented by the proposed treaty with Canada.

The Department of the Interior letter to the Federal Power Commission is attached.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

Nov. 21, 1960

Dear Mr. Kuykendall:

This is in reply to your letters of October 21, 1959, and March 25, 1960, requesting the comments of this Department on the amended application for major license for the proposed Mountain Sheep Project (FPC No. 2243) and for the proposed Nez Perce Project (FPC No. 2273), respectively.

In carrying out this Department's responsibility for the protection and conservation of the vital Northwest anadromous fishery resource and in light of the fact that the power to be available as a result of ratification of the proposed Columbia River treaty with Canada will provide needed time which can be devoted to further efforts to resolve the fishery problems presently posed by these applications, we believe that it is unnecessary at this time and for some years to come to undertake any project in this area.

You may be assured that the Fish and Wildlife Service of this Department will continue, with renewed emphasis, the engineering and research studies that must be done before we can be assured that the passage of anadromous fish can be provided for at these proposed projects.

As you know, during the course of this Department's consideration of the applications of the High Mountain Sheep and Nez Perce sites our Government has been actively engaged in the negotiation of a treaty with Canada for the development of storage projects on the upper Columbia River. On October 19 the President announced this Government's approval of the recommended proposals for the cooperative development of the Columbia River Basin in Canada and the United States. Simultaneously, Prime Minister Diefenbaker announced the approval of the Government of Canada. Enclosed are the "Analysis and Progress Report" which sets out the text of the recommended proposals and the analysis thereof by the United States negotiating team, the President's announcements of October 19 and the Department of the Interior's information release of the same date.

The recommended proposals envisage the construction on the Columbia River, in Canada, within a 10-year period of reservoirs providing 15.5 million acre-feet of storage. The proposals also would clear the way for construction by the United States, at its option, of the Libby Project, authorized by the Congress in 1950, on the Kootenai River in northern Montana. The Libby Project contains about 5 million acre-feet of additional storage.

The President has indicated that he intends to submit a treaty embodying the recommended proposals to the Senate for ratification early in January. Ratification of the treaty will immediately initiate the construction of the 15.5 million acre-feet of storage in Canada and undoubtedly will result in an early start on the 5 million acre-feet of storage at the Libby site.

The addition of this amount of new storage, some 20.5 million acre-feet, will increase the controlled storage on the Columbia River to approximately 33 million acre-feet which results in an entirely new regimen for the river in which the 1894 flood is completely controlled at The Dalles to an estimated 720,000 c.f.s. and the storage withdrawal period for power operations is increased from $7\frac{1}{2}$ months to 20 months.

This means that the prime power capability (as well as the flood control impact) of all future projects such as Nez Perce and High Mountain Sheep must be re-evaluated in light of the new development called for in the proposed Canadian treaty.

It also means that the United States will have available to it a minimum of an additional 1,686,000 kw of prime power to meet anticipated load growth. In addition, it clears the way for, and makes much more attractive, such projects as Wells, for which a license application is now pending, with an estimated prime power capability of about 355,000 kw and Kootenai Falls with an estimated prime power capability of about 105,000 kw, which will become feasible and desirable after Libby comes into operation.

The Chief of Engineers in his proposed "308 Report" to the Secretary of the Army indicated that his consideration of the timing of either of the projects, Nez Perce or High Mountain Sheep, is necessarily directly related to the timing and availability of additional power resources which could be developed from Canadian storage and Libby.

Based on average load projections of the 1955-1985 period, the Chief of Engineers indicated that absent Canadian storage and Libby, it would be necessary, from the point of view of power, to start advance engineering and detailed design for a project with capabilities of High Mountain Sheep in 1965 (1962, under maximum load predictions). The proposed report is now undergoing review by the Chief of Engineers to reflect the impact of the Canadian agreement, of which he is one of the negotiators. However, his observations do indicate, at least in a general way, the impact of the availability of power due to Canadian storage and Libby on the Middle Snake area as a potential site for hydroelectric development. They are referred to here for that purpose. In this connection, may we note that load estimates projected by the Commission staff in these proceedings do not meet the "308 Report" minimum projection until 1965 nor the average until 1970.

The current load and resource forecast of the Bonneville Power Administration for the area it serves is set out in the enclosed "Power Outlook 1960-70." The attached table shows the effect of Canadian storage and Libby upon the power supply picture depicted in table 3 at page 9 of the "Power Outlook." As the tabulation indicates, having available the power resources created by Canadian storage and Libby, planning of projects for this reach of the river could safely be delayed for a number of years even without considering the additional power that would come from the addition of Wells and Kootenai Falls. These projects could extend the time still further, as could also be the case in the event nuclear power materialized at Hanford in the 1960-1970 period. This possibility, as you know, has been under intensive study by your staff for the Atomic Energy Commission, in which study the staff of the Bonneville Power Administration participated. In addition, for limited periods, some of Canada's share of the power may be available to the United States market. In all, the possibilities are such that even with an allowance for the addition of a very considerable new industrial load on the Bonneville system, at least five to six years' time can be realized without considering either Mountain Sheep or Nez Perce.

The President, in the White House statement of October 19, stated that,

"Due to the location of this proposed storage, there will be no interference with the cycle for salmon and other anadromous fish, which constitute such an important and recreational asset for the people of the Pacific Northwest.

"The large block of flood control storage and power that will be realized over the next decade as a result of this cooperative undertaking affords us a greater degree of selectivity in the planning and timing of potential domestic projects in order to take into fullest consideration conservation as well as purely economic needs. Sorely needed time will be gained which can be devoted to the research and study which must go into the solution of the problem, particularly pressing today in our Northwest states, of harmonizing construction of large storage dams with fish and wildlife needs. In this way the agreement can make a maximum contribution to the fostering of conservation in its highest sense, the optimum harmonization of our multipurpose needs."

For this reason, we are impelled to advise that initiation of a project in the Middle Snake area is not requisite at this time.

The experience of recent years amply demonstrates the need for a period of time that can be devoted to further research and experimentation in the handling of anadromous fish before additional

construction is undertaken in this area. We need not restate here, for the facts are well known to the Commission, the difficulties that have been experienced in connection with fish passage facilities at the Oxbow and Brownlee projects. We would, in this connection, merely refer to our letters to the Commission discussing these matters. Similarly, testimony given by fishery experts of this Department in previous hearings affecting the Middle Snake area has amply indicated the scope of the fishery resource involved and the magnitude of the problems posed by the further project construction in the area at this time. Only a brief resume of the impact of each of the projects for which an application is pending on the fishery resource of the Columbia need, therefore, be set out in this letter.

The proposed Nez Perce project would affect runs of anadromous fish that utilize spawning and rearing areas in the main Snake River upstream from licensed Idaho Power Company projects, in the Salmon and Imnaha Rivers, and in other tributaries of lesser importance. The commercial and sport fisheries dependent on Middle Snake River production are worth millions of dollars annually. The Snake River produces about 40 percent of all the salmon and steelhead trout of the Columbia River Basin, and that portion of the Snake River Basin lying above Nez Perce damsite accounts for three-fourths of the Snake River production. The Salmon River is by far the most important fish producing tributary in the entire Columbia River Basin. The Salmon River is estimated to provide about 50 percent of the entire production of anadromous fish in the Snake River. The Salmon and Imnaha Rivers are in rugged, primitive country, and furnish outstanding habitat and water conditions for the production of the particularly valuable spring chinooks and steelheads. In addition, the Salmon River system is one of three remaining production areas of blueback salmon in the Columbia River Basin. The only other rivers still producing bluebacks are the Wenatchee and Okanogan. Resident game fish would also be affected adversely by the proposed project.

The proposed High Mountain Sheep Reservoir, in addition to affecting runs going up the Snake River, would flood the lower nine miles of the Imnaha River. The applicant has indicated its willingness to expend considerable sums on the construction and operation of unique and elaborate facilities for the preservation of the Imnaha River fish runs. However, these facilities are unproved. Moreover, the application associates the proposed project with the Lower Canyon project on the Salmon River as providing substantially the same development as the Nez Perce project. The Salmon River is estimated to provide about 50 percent of the entire production of

anadromous fish in the Snake River. There are at present no known means for protecting the fishery resources of the Salmon River if either the Lower Canyon or Nez Perce project were constructed.

As between the two projects, the Nez Perce project would have the greater impact upon anadromous fish, particularly in view of the larger runs that would be affected. However, for reasons already set out, in this Department's view, conservation in the fullest sense calls for a deferral while full advantage is taken of the opportunity presented by Canadian storage and Libby.

Advice as to fishways under Section 18 of the Federal Power Act will be forthcoming at a later date. With respect to other issues presented by the pending applications, the following comments are offered.

The Fish and Wildlife Service reports that mule deer are the only big game species utilizing the Nez Perce site. Many of these deer are permanent residents, occupying the Hells Canyon of the Snake River and the lower reaches of the Salmon and Imnaha Rivers. Other wildlife that utilize the Nez Perce project area include valley quails, mountain quails, Hungarian partridges, chukar partridges, blue grouse, ruffed grouse, mourning doves, otters, beavers, muskrats, raccoons, coyotes, badgers, skunks, Canada geese, mallards, pintails, cinnamon teal, and goldeneyes. Several thousand acres of mule deer range would be inundated and there would be a moderate reduction in the number of deer as a result of loss of range. There would be losses of upland game, fur animals, and waterfowl. Reservoir margins would be barren and unattractive to all wildlife groups. Waterfowl use of the reservoir would be insignificant. There does not appear to be any feasible means of mitigating wildlife losses.

There is a sizable population of mule deer in the High Mountain Sheep project area. Elk and a few white-tailed deer also utilize the area. Valley quails, mountain quails, Hungarian partridges and chukar partridges comprise most of the upland game population in the reservoir area. There are small numbers of both blue and ruffed grouse. Otters, beavers, and muskrats are the most important fur animals, but are not abundant. The area is used by ducks, Canada geese, and mourning doves during migration. Wintering populations of migratory waterfowl are low. There is some goose and duck nesting in the area. It is believed that adverse effects of the proposed project on wildlife could be mitigated.

Each of the proposed project developments is located downstream from extensive existing, proposed, and potential water utilization projects in the upper Snake River Basin. To be feasible these future irrigation developments must have an assured water supply free from downstream encumbrances. If either application for license is granted, the following stipulation is requested for inclusion:

The use of the waters of the Snake River and its tributaries in connection with works constructed pursuant to this license shall be subordinated to all existing and future depletion of streamflow attributable to future downstream diversions for irrigation and other beneficial consumptive uses.

Each of the projects, if constructed, should be fully integrated and coordinated electrically and hydraulically with the Northwest Power Pool through the Bonneville Power Administration transmission grid.

Any license, if issued, should also provide that rights-of-way granted across Federal lands for transmission lines constructed in connection with the project are subject to the prior rights for any future Federal reclamation projects, and that any adjustments in said transmission lines required by the construction of any future Federal reservoirs, canals, pipelines, ditches, drains, access roads, etc., shall be made at the expense of the licensee.

Exhibit H in the Mountain Sheep application states:

"The reservoir will be operated for flood control after March 1 on instruction from the Corps of Engineers. Operation for flood control will, under certain runoff conditions, impair the power capacity of the project which will require replacement or compensation."

Such replacement or compensation would require legislation.

To the extent that either applicant has received valuable information and data from the Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps of Engineers in connection with their project investigations, it is requested that any license require equitable reimbursement to the Federal Government for such data beneficially utilized by the applicant.

The National Park Service reports that the reservoir area involved in these applications offers great potentials for archeology. It is, therefore, recommended that a license, if issued, provide that the licensee make available an amount not to exceed \$44,000, or \$7,500 in the case of Mountain Sheep, to the Idaho State College for the purpose of undertaking an archeological survey and salvage excavations prior to construction and flooding.

The Bureau of Mines suggests that a full and complete examination and report regarding the mineral situation in the areas not covered by the application for FPC Project No. 2173 be made by a recognized competent mine examination engineer. The Geological Survey reports that the additional lands affected by the application for project No. 2273 contain placer gold deposits in bars and benches at numerous places along the Salmon River throughout the reach involved. Values range from a few cents to more than \$1.00 per yard.

Sincerely yours,


Acting Secretary of the Interior

Hon. Jerome K. Kuykendall, Chairman
Federal Power Commission
Washington 25, D. C.

Enclosures

AN ESTIMATE OF POWER SITUATION, WEST GROUP AREA, 1961-62 through 1970-71
Critical Prime Power Period

	1961-62	1962-63	1963-64	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
1. Area Firm Power Surplus or (Deficit) from Table 3 - 1960-70 "Power Outlook" 1/	776	492	408	223	(117)	(492)	(198)	(506)	(963)	(1,445)
2. Canadian Storage & Libby 2/	-	-	-	-	-	792	1,184	1,356	1,487	1,585
3. Surplus or (Deficit) After Canadian Storage 1/	776	492	408	223	(117) 2/	300	986	850	524	140

(Thousands of Average Kilowatts)

1/ After losses to the load centers and reserves.

2/ Deficit could be eliminated by anticipated partial availability of Canadian storage in 4th year following treaty ratification.

New Resources - Estimated Dates of Initial Operation:

- Line 2
- Duncan Lake, July 1966
- Arrow Lakes, July 1966
- Libby - Storage, Sept. 1967
- Libby - Generation, Sept. 1968
- Mica - 4 million A.F., July 1969
- Mica - 7 million A.F., July 1970