

FERC staff document opposes dam on southeast Idaho river

Construction of new storage reservoir in Oneida Narrows an environmental concern

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

PORTLAND, Idaho — Staff members with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have made a preliminary recommendation against licensing a proposed storage reservoir within the Oneida Narrows stretch of the Bear River in southeast Idaho.

In a draft environmental impact statement issued Sept. 30, FERC staffers argued the loss of recreational opportunities and critical habitat for sensitive wildlife, including Bonneville cutthroat trout, would outweigh the project's hydropower and storage benefits.

Irrigators with Twin Lakes Canal Co., who routinely cope with water shortages, applied for a FERC dam license in November of 2013.

Issuance of the draft EIS has triggered a public comment period scheduled to run through Nov. 30, said FERC spokeswoman Celeste Miller. She said public comment on the draft will be addressed in the staff's final EIS, which will serve as an official recommendation when

the five FERC commissioners ultimately vote on the license. Miller said no public comment will be taken on the final EIS.

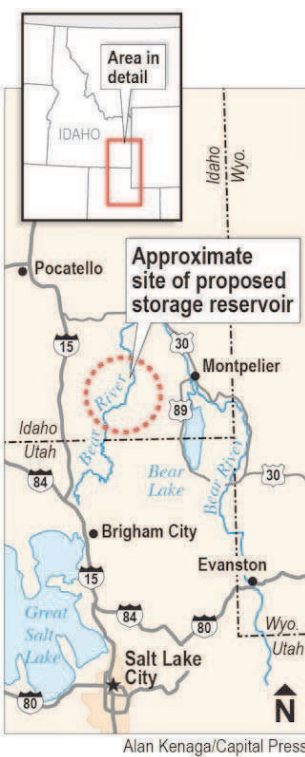
She said the timeline for issuance of a final EIS and a vote by the commission "really depends on the number and scope of comments we get on the draft."

In the event of a license denial, Twin Lakes would have 30 days to appeal for a rehearing by the same FERC commissioners.

The 10-foot earthen dam would be overlaid with concrete and form a 362-acre reservoir with a storage capacity of 12,647 acre-feet. The project would also include a 10-megawatt power facility, which would generate revenue to help pipe the company's canal system.

Twin Lakes resident Clair Bosen declined comment on the FERC licensing project, at his board's directive, but emphasized the general importance of water in an arid state.

"Idaho is a desert. We all need to conserve water," Bosen said. "The U.S. has got to be concerned about getting water



Alan Kenagal/Capital Press

stored, just like we store fruits and vegetables in winter to use in the summer."

This season, Bosen said his irrigators were allocated 1.2-acre-foot allotments, compared with 2 acre-feet in a normal year. Bosen added that there's little carryover in his company's reservoirs.

"We were all drained out," Bosen said.

According to FERC's draft

EIS, the proposed dam would have provided an average of 3,110 acre-feet of extra storage per year from 1970 through 2010, reducing farm production losses by an average of 146,170 per year. The 230 Twin Lakes shareholders irrigate 16,000 acres.

But the draft FERC document also concluded the proposal would harm 48 state-designated sensitive wildlife species and flood a 4.5-mile reach that "supports a regionally significant riverine Bonneville cutthroat recreational fishery" that draws roughly 9,500 anglers per year.

"The overall, unavoidable adverse environmental effects would outweigh the potential storage benefits of the project," the staff wrote.

Kevin Lewis, conservation director with Idaho Rivers United, noted the Idaho Department of Water Resources has already denied water rights for the project.

Lewis believes construction of the dam would lead to an endangered species listing for Bonneville cutthroat trout. He argued Idaho's best dam sites have already been developed.

"I don't have any concern that (FERC) will reverse the recommendation of this draft EIS," Lewis said.

Groups signal plan to sue feds in effort to save trout

By KEITH RIDLER
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A federal plan to bolster threatened populations of bull trout in five Western states falls short, two conservation groups said as they filed notice of their intention to sue the government.

The proposal to aid the fish's recovery violates the Endangered Species Act, the groups Alliance for the Wild Rockies and Friends of the Wild Swan said in a notice Wednesday to Interior Secretary Sally Jewell.

"They essentially want to redefine recovery to almost anything," said Mike Arrity, executive director of Alliance for the Wild Rockies. "They're lowering the bar so they can delist bull trout."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said Thursday that it does not comment on pending litigation. The agency last month released a proposal outlining ways to boost bull trout populations in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana and a tiny portion of Nevada.

The groups say the plan doesn't set measurable goals for removing the species from the endangered list.

Bull trout prey on young salmon and salmon eggs and have declined along with that



Ryan Brennecke/AP File photo

Two conservation groups say a federal plan to bolster bull trout in five Western states falls short and they've filed a 60-day notice of their intention to sue.

The trout was listed as threatened in the Lower 48 states in 1992 and now occupy only about 60 percent of their former range.

Threats to the cold-water species include warming water caused by climate change, isolated populations, hybridization with non-native brook trout, and competition from foreign lake trout, experts say.

The recovery plan stems from the settlement of a lawsuit last year by the same two environmental groups. Federal agencies and other entities can use it to guide conservation efforts, officials said.

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Hamilton City FFA *Thinks Pink*



By Mori Leveroni
Chapter Reporter

With 1-in-8 women being diagnosed in their lifetime, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women. Hamilton City, Calif., FFA is using the awareness month of October as another opportunity to stick by this year's motto, "Living to Serve."

On Oct. 7, members of the chapter came together and assembled over 350 carnation wraps in order to reach out to the community through education and support. The wraps were composed of a pink carnation and an informational brochure with facts and symptoms about this tragic disease.

The members then set out and gave away the flowers free of charge at local coffee shops, grocery stores and even to teachers in the district.

Our annual pink campaign could not have been achieved if it wasn't for the help of our 200 members. Hamilton High School is a small school located in Northern California. We have a small town feel and pride ourselves on having two-thirds of our school participate in FFA. As a chapter we pride ourselves in being active in our community, which can be seen with our pink carnation event. We hope that by spreading awareness locally, we can inspire others to take the first step and get checked.



Committee members trim carnations and place water vials, sleeves, early detection brochures and an FFA sticker. FFA members pictured are Ariel Leal, Ezequiel Polino, James Elliott, Emmy Henning and Javi Bravo.

Tying bows and quality control was the last step before distribution. Pictured are student teacher Isaac Valencia and FFA President Cade Johnson.

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Some 360 wrapped carnations are shown ready for distribution. Students pictured are Lizette Diaz, Kathy Valle, Ana Ramirez, Chantal Ortiz, Jesus Ortiz, Chairman Mariana Rios, Rebekah Erickson, Leticia Ojeda and Frida Valle.

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