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Thursday, January 25

7:30 P.M.

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Criticism builds behind McKenzie dam project

By CATHERINE SIEGNER
Of the Emerald

A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan to build a second dam on the South Fork of the McKenzie River met with confusion, qualified approval and outright rejection at a public hearing Tuesday afternoon in Ham's Hall.

The proposed Strube Dam project, authorized by Congress in the 1962 Flood Control Act, includes construction of an embankment dam, a 3500-acre-foot lake, a concrete spillway and a small powerhouse at the Strube site two miles downstream from Cougar Reservoir. Modifications to the intake facilities and the powerhouse at Cougar Dam are included as well.

When completed, Strube Dam would regulate the water level below Cougar Dam if Cougar's generation ability is used to produce "peaking" power, which is the electricity demanded at peak periods — usually early morning and evening hours — over and above the "base" level demanded at a constant rate.

Strube would produce 4.6 megawatts of power, and the Cougar Dam modifications would increase the generating capacity there from 25 to 60 megawatts. The total price tag is \$56.2 million.

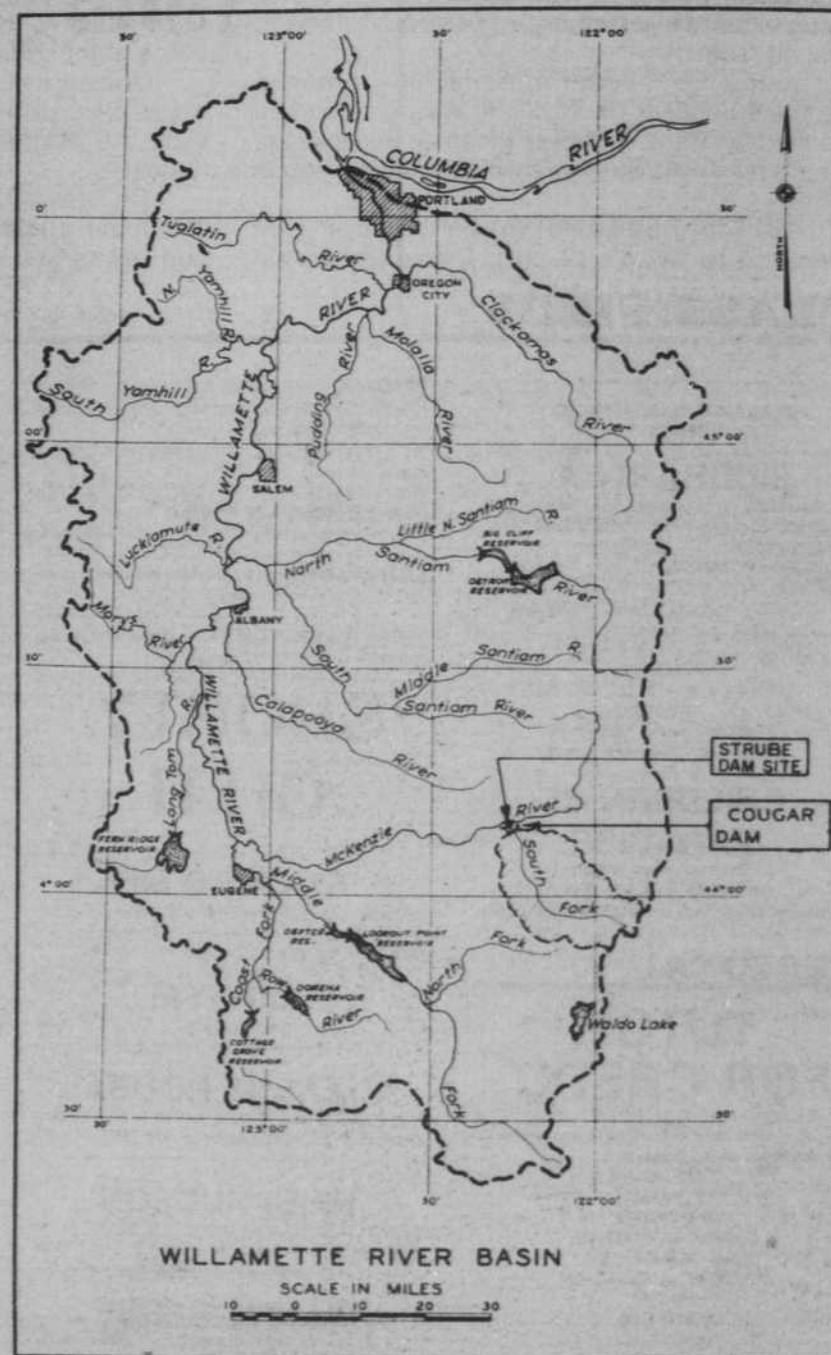
"The need for peaking power has not been demonstrated," said Jim Stratton, University Survival Center director. "The corps is blindly following the Bonneville Power Administration's Hydro-Thermal Power Program. Hydropower shouldn't be used for peaking."

Stratton said the corps based its forecast for power on an "unnamed forecast" in its draft Environmental Impact Statement, just released.

"The recent state Department of Energy study lists five alternatives to building new generation facilities," Stratton said. "They include interrupting power to industrial customers and purchases of peaking power outside the region. This project is a waste of taxpayers' money."

The corps admitted in its presentation Tuesday that fisheries and wildlife habitat would be displaced by the project, but said mitigation plans, including a fish ladder and incubation and rearing ponds, would compensate for the fisheries loss.

"The Cougar Creek mitigation



area of 100 acres will provide 20

percent mitigation for the wildlife habitat displaced by Strube Dam," said Kenneth S. Cooper of the corps' Portland office.

"Federal land will be managed for Roosevelt elk and deer populations," Cooper added. "That will meet 50 percent of the mitigation requirement."

Cooper said the corps had considered purchasing 350 acres of privately held land near the project site for wildlife mitigation, but now recommends against the purchase.

Ned Duhnkrack of the Oregon Wilderness Coalition testified that the purchase of the private land would revoke the corps' right to the 3 1/4 percent interest rate on the project guaranteed by the original project authorization.

"The corps refuses to purchase that land because it would have to go back to Congress and get a project reauthorization," Duhnkrack asserted. "It would then be at 6 7/8 percent interest and would reduce the cost/benefit ratio for the project from 1.29 to .66."

Mel Jackson of Eugene said he was "willing to accept the wildlife mitigation as a trade-off" for using existing facilities at Cougar Dam for greater capacity, but said he had concerns about fluctuations in the water level.

Cooper of the Corps told Jackson the McKenzie could fluctuate at Strube "as much as 25 feet on a weekly basis, and 18 feet on any given day."

Richard Wyland, an ecologist from rural Lane County said he had "numerous concerns" about the wildlife habitat, possible degradation of water quality and the implications of a possible mass soil movement caused by the project.

"There are already soil problems at Cougar," Wyland said. "Is this just another project to mitigate the silt downstream? We'll just need another later if it is."

"We can ill afford such wasteful projects," Wyland added. "It only prolongs our addiction to power. It would be better to encourage conservation instead of these hand-aid remedies."

The Corps will accept written comments on the Strube Dam draft EIS until Feb. 22. Comments should be addressed to U.S. Army Engineer District, Portland, NPPEN-PL-2, P.O. Box 2946, Portland, 97208.

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