STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

STATE OFFICE BUILDING • HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06115

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Petition No. 71

Jewett City, Connecticut

Commissioner Boucher, Ms. Bates, Mr. Wood and Mr. Reid met Mr. Stackpole and Mr. Siart of Wyre Wynd, Inc. and Mr. Hunter of Southwire Company at the Wyre Wynd facility in Jewett City to review Petition No. 71.

This petition involves the rehabilitation of an existing hydroelectric facility at the Wyre Wynd plant on the Quinebaug River. The company has petitioned the Council to determine that no certificate of environmental compatibility and public need is required for this project because it will not have any substantial adverse environmental effect and becuase it does not constitute eigher a new facility or a modification of an existing facility.

The company plans to repair the existing dam by restoring the two foot high flash boards to their original condition, repairing the presently inoperable outlet works, and building a new power house immediately north of the abandoned penstock intake structures (which must be removed) at the end of the forebay basin. The new power house will contain one turbine with a capacity of 2500 kW. The original power house was last operated in late 1968 and early 1969, and had a capacity of 1100-1200 kW.

Several regulatory approvals or permits are required before the project can proceed. The major requirement is a license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The FERC licensing procedure requires that most other regulatory procedures and permits be completed before the license is filed. FERC receives information from the Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Department of the Interior (DOI).

The state Department of Environmental Protection has corresponded with Wyre Wynd, Inc., and reviewed their proposal, but DEP has not exercised any regulatory authority yet. DEP is responsible for issuing a dam permit, reviewing impacts on wetlands and fisheries, and establishing a required minimum flow. Also, the proposal is reviewed to determine whether or not the project is within the state water quality standards; and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and a discharge program is administered by the DEP Water Compliance Unit. These state approvals are required before the Army Corps of Engineers will issue a 404 Dredge and Fill permit which is also required for this project. In addition, the Army Corps' 404 permit process receives input from the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

According to Mr. Hunter, the DEP and the EPH have determined that a minimum flow of 80 cubic feet per second (cfs) is necessary to maintain adequate water quality but the Fish and Wildlife Service believes the flow should be higher. Southwire Company has retained a private consultant to study the low flow biological requirements of the river. The consultant's report is due this month and will be part of the environmental report submitted with the FERC license later this month.

The ability of the watershed to maintain a flow of 80 cfs at the dam is dicussed in a cost and engineering feasibility study which will also accompany the FERC license.

Presently the dam has a 17 foot head. The addition of 2 foot flash boards will restore the original 19 foot head and raise the surface of Aspinook Pond to the level it maintained from 1913 to 1976. According to company personnel, few lake front property owners, if any, will be adversely affected by the increase in water level. Under normal operation the proposed hydrofacility will result in a six inch fluctuation in water level.

The company expressed a willingness to consider providing a fish ladder when anadromous fish are able to pass the two dams down river and arrive at their facilities. The company may or may not be required to establish a fish passage depending on recommendations made by DEP, FERC's discretion in the licensing process, or regulations regarding an exemption status granted by FERC. According to Mr. Hunter, a requirement to provide fish passage at this time would render the project uneconomical. Thus, this issue when successful passage is established at the Tunnel Dam and Greenville Dam down river.

According to the DEP's comments to FERC, referred to in the petition, the discharge configuration could be designed to help ameliorate the eutrophic condition of Aspinook Pond. This possibility is addressed in the petition, although the short and long term impacts of releases of accumulated sediments the river down stream have not yet been considered. The company is not knowledgeable at this time at to what materials may be deposited in sediments behind the dam. The project is estimated to cost 3-½ million dollars; with construction now scheduled to begin in February, 1982.

Duncan C. Reid
Environmentalist
August 3, 1981