

Grange asks "Is there a place for hydropower?"

By PATTY GROSS
Staff Correspondent

HUNTINGDON — What better place to talk about hydroelectric power than at Raystown Lake in Huntingdon County.

Members of the Pennsylvania State Grange gathered at the lake last month for their first energy conference. The day-long seminar was sponsored by the Grange and the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association.

State Grange Master Charles Wismer said the seminar was organized for the Grange's energy and legislative committees, to learn about the potential for hydroelectric, power development in the future.

They heard the bad along with the good. Hydropower is clean, safe and dependable, but it's an expensive proposition.

"Pennsylvania's Rural Electric Cooperatives have been actively looking at the potential for hydroelectric generating for five or six years," explained Joe Dudick of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association and Allegheny Electric Cooperative.

Dudick told the group that his firm commissioned a study in 1977-78 of the potential for water power facilities. The engineering study concluded that there were over 100 sites that were worth looking at more closely. Those sites have been evaluated to indicate which is the most feasible to develop.

The Raystown Lake is one of six sites being studied for water power. The Raystown branch of the Juniata River extends 30 miles and covers 118 shoreline miles. The land and water, over 29,000 acres, owned by the federal government

entertains the public year-round with boating, fishing, hunting, camping and swimming. The dam was constructed between 1968 and 1973.

The other locations under study are Emsworth at Nevil Island and the Montgomery Project in Beaver County, both on the Ohio River. There is also the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Locks and Dams number 8 and 9, navigation facilities on the Allegheny River in Armstrong County.

There already are three "hydro" facilities operating in the state.

A number of factors are considered for a site to be able to produce electricity: the "head" of the site — the greater the water fall means the more energy there is to be captured; the annual flow of the body of water; environmental concerns which would result in condemning land; the facility surroundings and the cost of possible relocation; and tax and regulatory policies that could throw the project out of the realm of feasibility.

Grangers were told candidly that money is the stumbling block for power. "A project that produces a relatively small amount of electricity, creates a very large investment for the utility that is building the hydroelectric site," commented Dudick.

"The major savings for a hydroelectric facility, is the fact that the "fuel" — water — is free and the operating costs are very small."

Dudick went on to say that a "hydro" plant is more expensive to build, than nuclear which in turn is more costly than coal. Also, along with the free water and small upkeep cost, "hydro" sites will last 100 years or more. Plants, such as nuclear and coal, may only be in use 25 to 35 years.

He concluded his portion of the seminar by saying that hydroelectricity is a good thing to support. "We believe that for the future of our state, water power and coal will be major sources of energy. They will provide us with lower energy costs and enable us to decrease the amount of imported oil that we use."

Dudick promised increased development of hydroelectric generation when the problems of taxation, excessive regulation and interest rates are successfully addressed.

A representative of the Governor's Energy Council updated the Grangers on the Energy Council's job. "We are trying to simplify the process and make the



"Raystown Belle" furnishes tours of recent day-long seminar on hydroelectric power. Raystown is sited for a hydro plant during the 1980's.



Raystown Lake in Huntingdon County is one of six sites currently being studied for the development of a hydroelectric plant. The Pennsylvania State Grange held a hydro seminar at the dam, which takes in 29,000 acres of government land and water.

burdens on developers easier while at the same time not greatly increase the risk of environmental harm," stated John Buffington.

Buffington advised anyone interested in launching a "hydro"

project to get a professional consultant with experience in the field. "The most important thing I have to say is don't try to go it alone," he stressed.

The Governor's Energy Council is preparing a "how-to" book on "hydro."

Those attending the energy seminar also were told to contact

the Department of Environmental Resources to acquire site information.

During the day an overview of the Raystown project was presented by Richard Osborne, staff engineer for Allegheny Electric Cooperative. As the gathering looked out from the

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Richard Osborne

Specter pushes hydropower legislation

WASHINGTON, DC — U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Ia) testified last month that the nation's Northeast-Midwest region desperately needs to tap its hydropower resources to cope with rising costs which have almost quadrupled in this area over the last decade.

Specter told the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources that S. 1918, the NE-MW States Federal Hydropower Financing Authorities Act, will help lower energy costs in the region and facilitate economic development.

The bill was introduced last December by Specter and Senator Donald W. Riegle, Jr., (D-Mich), who are co-chairmen of the Senate Northeast-Midwest Coalition.

The legislation would make the 18 states of the region eligible to apply for low-cost loans and loan guarantees to cover up to 70 percent of the costs involved with hydroelectric development.

Specter told the subcommittee that the NE-MW region is burdened with the highest per household energy costs in the U.S. Part of the reason for this, he said, is that just about every other area of the country except the NE-MW has received federal aid in finding solutions to energy problems.

Specter noted that the average household energy cost in New England rose from \$386 in 1970 to \$1,325 in 1980, while in the West the cost rose from \$263 to \$676. The State of Washington, he said, is blessed with the lowest residential energy costs in the nation, largely because of the Bonneville Power Administration, an example of energy aid by the federal government.

"In 1980," he said, residents of my own State of Pennsylvania spent 227 percent more on energy costs than did households in Washington state. Similar patterns exist in the commercial and industrial sectors.

Those areas which have been able to produce hydroelectric power pay less for energy, he said, noting that over 80 percent of the electricity generated in Oregon and Washington comes from hydropower, whereas almost 80 percent of the electricity in Rhode Island and Massachusetts is produced with petroleum.

"Yet the fact is the Northeast-Midwest has an abundant, but largely unused, source of energy in its waterpower," said Specter.

In arguing for subcommittee approval for the legislation, he said that the Congress in the past had clearly responded to the energy needs of the rest of the nation.

"I believe the federal government has the responsibility to do no less for the economically depressed Northeast-Midwest region of America than it has done from time to time for other areas with similar economic development problems," Specter concluded.



Joe Dudick of Allegheny Electric Cooperative explains the potential of hydroelectric generation in Pennsylvania. Ben Slick, left, was chairman of a hydroelectric seminar, organized by the Grange and Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association.