

County Wants Its Own Hydroelectric Plant

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The county government is competing with Lockheed Missile and Space Corp. for the right to build a large hydroelectric power plant in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

In a 4-1 vote Tuesday, with Supervisor E. Wayne Moore Jr. against, supervisors agreed to apply to the federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a preliminary permit for a hydroelectric facility on Lockheed's land at the end of Empire Grade Road.

Lockheed filed a similar application in February.

Lockheed, according to Acting Plant Manager Vern Smith, would probably want to cooperate with local government in building the hydroelectric facility on Big and Boyer creeks, but would want to retain some interest in the project, since it would be built largely on Lockheed property.

For that reason, Smith said, Lockheed doesn't intend to drop its application simply because the county has applied for a preliminary permit.

Whoever gets the permit simply would be granted the opportunity to prepare a study on the possibility of constructing the power plant, Smith explained. The study must be done within three years.

But whoever gets to do the study also gets the chance to apply for a license to build the plant once the study is completed.

The supervisors' action Tuesday ties in closely with a move by supervisors last week in which they called for a study on the county government taking over the functions of PG&E.

But the proposed power plant wouldn't just produce

electricity. It also would produce water.

The plant, as envisioned by Lockheed in its application, would include two earthen dams, a 7,000-foot-long pipeline, a powerhouse and a 3.5-mile overhead power transmission line.

The main dam at the confluence of the two creeks would hold about 27,000 acre feet of water, slightly more than the 24,500 acre feet of water that would be held behind the Zayante Dam proposed by the city of Santa Cruz.

Lockheed, Smith stressed, isn't planning on using the power and water from the plant at its own facility. Instead, this power and water would be sold to local government agencies, he explained.

"It (the power and water) would be for the community and it would be necessary for the community to say this is a good idea and we want to pursue it," Smith said this morning.

Smith had stated earlier if there was any controversy from the community over the plans, Lockheed would drop them immediately.

In a letter to supervisors, County Planning Director Kris Schenk explained that if the county didn't apply for a permit, it would have no say whatsoever in the project.

"By filing a competing application, the county can continue to participate in the development of this hydroelectric project," Schenk stated. "If the county takes no action, the development of the largest proposed dam and reservoir in the county could be negotiated by a private company and a federal agency."

If the county gets the permit, he added, it would guarantee that all local regulations are followed when the plant is built, including regulations regarding the protec-

tion of the environment.

The federal Energy Regulatory Commission, he noted, is not required to review compliance with state and local regulations when it issues licenses to permit construction of such a project.

Meanwhile, Santa Cruz City councilmembers said Tuesday that if there is going to be a hydroelectric plant on the north coast, they want a piece of the action.

City councilmembers told City Manager Richard Wilson Tuesday evening to inform county government and Lockheed Missiles and Space Company in Bonny Doon the city should be included in future power plans.

Wilson told the council "we think it's infeasible" but he recommended the precautionary action.

Only Councilman Joe Ghio voted against it, saying, "If it's infeasible, why bother."