

6-12-84 *Hydroelectric Power Plant*

# Supervisors fire up plans for power plant

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SANTA CRUZ — Plans to develop a small-scale hydroelectric power plant on the North Coast crystallized today when county supervisors approved the project in concept.

The unanimous action today paves the way for development of a hydro plant with the potential to produce 2.5 million kilowatts of electricity a year — enough to power 416 homes, said county energy consultant Mary Ann Johnson.

The plan was approved without comment.

The plant will be built on Big Creek and Boyer Creek, about four miles north of Davenport where a similar project once stood.

That plant, built in the 1890s, provided

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enough juice to power the Boardwalk, said Johnson. It was destroyed by fire in the 1940s, she added.

The hydro project lay dormant until Lockheed Missiles and Space Co. applied to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in May 1982 for a permit to build it.

Lockheed planned to build two large earthen dams behind the creeks, with a water pipeline 7,000 feet long. The system would have generated nine kilowatt-hours of electricity.

When the county learned of Lockheed's proposal, it decided to explore the possibility of designing the plant itself. Under the federal "municipal preference" regulations, the county prevailed, winning the permit from Lockheed.

According to Johnson, the county is still working closely with Lockheed and owners of Big Creek Lumber Co., on whose land the powerhouse lies. She said cooperation between the three entities is essential for the success of the project.

The county's plans are scaled back from

those proposed by Lockheed. Instead of two dams, the county has proposed diverting water from the two creeks to a penstock, which will carry the water to a powerhouse.

The drastic drop in elevation from the top of the penstock to the powerhouse provides the power to turn the turbines, which in turn propels a generator that creates the electricity.

Johnson said the county is considering selling the power it generates to PG&E, but final agreements have not yet been worked out.

The county's action today paves the way for an environmental impact report, which the federal government requires. The board also entered into an agreement with Impell Corp., a Walnut Creek-based energy consulting firm, to help design the project.