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TVA Is Accused of Suppressing Unfavorable Aspect of Dams

T1-18-74 p.6

Special to The Chattanooga Times

WINCHESTER, Tenn. — A former researcher for the Tennessee Valley Authority has testified TVA officials suppressed advice from their own experts regarding unfavorable aspects of the Columbia and Normandy dams.

John Meldorf said TVA General Manager Lynn Seeber informed staff officials in 1971 that the environmental impact statement on the dams should omit some environmental data and be 'a public relations document" for the agency.

Meldorf, who was in charge of organizing TVA's environmental statement for the Upper Duck River project, testifed in a federal court trial of a suit by the Duck River Preservation Association.

The association is challenging the adequacy of TVA's environmental statement for the dams.

Meldorf, 26, now a third-year law student at Vanderbilt University, said TVA staff experts found that losses resulting from flooding agricultural land would total $4.2 million.

But he said the experts' superiors prohibited the final environmental statement from stating that.

Meldorf said that after one draft of the document was prepared, Seeber called a staff meeting, saying he wanted "to set the record straight on environmental impact statements."

"He (Seeber) said an environmental impact statement should be a public relations document—something to give TVA's side of the story," Meldorf quoted Seeber as saying.

Lawyers for TVA were expected to begin presenting their defense of the document Thursday. Seeber is expected to be among the defense witnesses.

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TVA Executive Reveals Omission In Dams Data

NFP 1-19-74 p. 2

WINCHESTER, Tenn. (AP)— The Tennessee Valley Authority's general manager testified Friday he deleted information from a draft environmental statement on two controversial Duck River dams.

Lynn Seeber said in U.S. District Court that conclusions of TVA staff experts who had researched the Columbia and Normandy dams were "entirely too negative."

Environmentalists opposing construction of the dams have charged that the TVA failed to include unfavorable information about the dams in the report required under federal law.

A former TVA researcher, John Meldorf, testified Thursday that Seeber had recommended deleting some environmental data from an early draft of the statement, saying it should be a "public relations document."

Seeber, testifying during trial of a suit brought by the Duck River Preservation Association, said he had been quoted out of context.

"It seemed the staff was preparing it for a technical reader. I wanted a draft that would go out to a general reader...and said it ought to be a public information—or a public relations—document."

He said he made an attempt to "balance" the environmental impact statement.

"I felt it (the draft) was entirely too negative," he said. "It seemed to talk too much about the 'bad' about the project and not enough about the 'good.'"

Attorneys for the plaintiffs have introduced a TVA memorandum written by a TVA agricultural expert, who projected annual farm related losses because of the dams at $6.9 million.

FEB 1974
TENNESSEE - Dams - T.V.A. - N.Z.
(January)

Dam Faces An Obstacle

T 10-10-79 p. C1

NASHVILLE (AP) — Tennes-Valley Authority's $140 million Columbia Dam, delayed by the federal endangered species act, faced another obstacle Tuesday from the state Health Department.

Balancing the Duck River project's potential for increasing the industrial water supply in four Middle Tennessee counties against the potential for increased pollution, health officials delayed a water quality permit.

Dr. Eugene Fowinkle, state health commissioner, said the permit must be granted the U.S. Corps of Engineers before the dam — and its proposed 12,600-acre lake — could be completed.

Polluted TVA Reservoir Certified by Fowinkle

+ 12-7-79 p. A-5

NASHVILLE (AP) — Conceding there will be pollution in the reservoir, the Tennessee health commissioner Thursday certified completion of the Tennessee Valley Authority's Columbia Dam.

Dr. Eugene Fowinkle, the commissioner, said he was advised that his decision will be contested in court. In addition, the dam cannot be completed until the Corps of Engineers has issued its own water quality permit.

The dam, on the Duck River near Columbia south of Nashville, is designed to increase residential and industrial water supply in four Middle Tennessee counties.

At a news conference, Fowinkle acknowledged that his decision to permit construction of the dam skirted the issue of pollution in the reservoir. But, he said, "the pivotal point in the decision" was his determination that state water quality regulations dealt only with discharged water — "water coming out of a pipe."

As a result, he said, the Health Department looked at the dam "as if it were the end of a pipe" and concluded the water discharged from the dam would present no problems downstream in the Duck River — the water which would be used by Columbia.

The study by Fowinkle's department has been under way since June. In October, the U.S. Interior Department removed its own objects to the $140 million dam after accepting TVA's plan for conserving two speices of mussel, fresh-water shell fish on the endangered species list.

"It's my understanding and expectation that this matter will ultimately be decided in the courts," Fowinkle said. "I've been told that it's very likely that we will be sued no matter which way the decision is made by a party that's dissatisfied with the decision."

The primary pollution problem in the reservoir, Fowinkle said, is algae — and "to the best of my knowledge, nobody ever died of algae."

Water Quality Decision Studied

TVA Dam Permit In Doubt

NFP 5-3-80 pA7

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UPI) — The validity of a decision by state officials to authorize construction of TVA's Columbia Dam was questioned Friday in a hearing before the state Water Quality Control Board.

State Attorney General William Leech told the board that Public Health Commissioner Eugene Fowinkle was required to consider the quality of water in the reservoir that would be formed in considering whether to grant a water quality permit.

But Fowinkle said last year that the "pivotal point" in deciding to grant the permit was his decision that the quality of water behind the dam need not be considered.

The board ordered the hearing to reconsider Fowinkle's decision at the request of environmental groups opposed to the Duck River project.

TVA attorney Jim Burger contended, on the other hand, that the previous decision came after "lengthy and very careful review" of the situation.

"In our view the certification is perfectly valid," said Burger. "The commissioner and his staff considered all the matters they are required to consider under federal law and state law."

Frank Fly, attorney for the environmentalist groups, said the board should "take an indepth look at all the water quality aspects of the Columbia Dam instead of merely accepting TVA's position."

Leech said Fowinkle had interpreted the law to mean that the water quality control act is not applicable to the impounded waters, but only to the discharge.

"We disagree with that," he said. "As the legal arm of the state is is our position that the water quality control board law applies to all water in the state, including impoundments."

Leech said the board was considering the question anew and is free to apply broader standards than Fowinkle had used.

"The board will be hearing the matter as if the commissioner had not decided either way," he said.

"The board could reach the determination that there is degradation of the quality of the water, but that is inconsiderable compared with the beneefits," he said. "Or they could decide that the degradation of the water quality outweighs the benefits and deny it."

TVA Given Permit To Resume Work On Duck River Project

NFO 9-27-80 P D1

By MATT YANCEY
Associated Press Writer

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Construction on the Tennessee Valley Authority's Columbia Dam may get underway again by next March after two years of delay under a new policy by the Army Corps of Engineers.

The corps announced Friday it will grant the necessary 404 permit then for TVA to resume construction unless the state of Tennessee revokes its water quality permit by that time.

The $153 million project has been stalled since March 1978 because TVA could not get the permit needed to dredge the Duck River and begin building the earthen portion of the dam.

TVA and Corps of Engineers officials have blamed the past six months of the stalemate and what will be at least another three months delay on disagreements among state officials over water quality assurances.

The corps had previously said it cannot issue a construction permit until it gets assurances from the state that all water quality issues have been resolved.

Tennessee Public Health Commissioner Eugene Fowinkle issued the necessary state permit in 1979 but Attorney General William Leech Jr. last May said the state erred in not considering the water quality of the lake that will be impounded.

Gen. Jack Morris, the corps' chief enigneer, said Friday his office will issue TVA a permit March 28, 1981, if the Tennessee Water Quality Board hasn't completed its actions by then. The state board's next hearing on the issue is set for Dec. 15.

"Should the state revoke the previous certification, the permit will not take place," Morris said.

Leech sided with environmentalists opposing the project after Fowinkle claimed that the state does not have to consider the water quality of the lake that will be created. The dam's opponents and some state officials have contended that impounding the river will create a large population of blue-green algae.

A large amount of algae would preclude any recreational use of the lake, one of the justification for the project. TVA has acknowledged that algae will increase but has maintained it can be controlled.

The dam, located about 40 miles south of Nashville, is one-third finished and TVA already has spent about $52 million on it. But the agency announced last week that it will lay off the remaining 78 construction workers Nov. 1 if the delays continue.

The Senate this week voted to appropriate $18 million in 1981 for the project though TVA still has close to $25 million in past appropriations not yet spent because of the delays.

"I hope the state acts promptly to reaffirm the certification and clear the way for work to resume," U.S. Sen. James Sasser, D-Tenn., said. "There already have been very many unnecessary and costly delays in the Columbia project."

The White House Office of Management and Budget under three presidents has tried to scuttle the dam, saying it will return only 80 cents in benefits for every dollar it costs. The project is now scheduled for completion in 1985 or 1986.

TVA's Freemans Hit On Columbia Project By Congressional Panel

T12-8-80 p. A1

By Philip Shabecoff
c. New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — The House Government Operations Committee has charged the chairman and a director of the Tennessee Valley Authority with misrepresenting key facts and withholding staff findings about a "superior" alternative to the controversial Columbia Dam project being undertaken by the agency.

In a report on an investigation by its subcommittee on environment, energy and natural works, the committee alleged that S. David Freeman, chairman of the TVA, and Richard Freeman, a director, withheld from the Office of Management and Budget and from the public their staff's recommendations for a "less costly, environmentally superior river development project." The two Freemans are not related.

On the basis of the investigation, the committee concluded that completion of the partially finished Columbia Dam project on the Duck River in Tennessee was "not in the public interest." The report said that the project's possible benefits could be obtained for $15 million to $25 million with the use of already existing nearby dams and reservoirs.

S. David Freeman, who became chairman of the agency in 1977, said in a telephone interview: "It is just not true that we withheld facts. I did not misrepresent any facts."

He said: "When I came on board, it was already largely built and Congress said finish it. I did what I was required to do under the law, and I have no apologies with the conservation program we worked out. We will leave that river cleaner than we found it."

Freeman said that Rep. Toby Moffett, D-Conn., chairman of the subcommittee, was quarreling with his refusal to take a position on the economic aspects of the Duck River project. "But I am not at liberty to second-guess a decision already made by Congress," he said.

Freeman has been praised by environmentalists for the actions he has taken since joining the agency.

Richard Freeman, the director of the agency, could not be reached for comment.

The $150 million Columbia Dam project, like another TVA project, the Tellico Dam, has been assailed by environmentalists, farmers and other critics as an unnecessary, expensive and environmentally harmful project that does not serve the interests of people in the Tennessee Valley.

Proponents of the dam claim a wide variety of benefits, including increased recreation for central Tennessee, standby water supplies and flood control. About $50 million has already been spent on the project.

Work on the dam is being held up while the TVA seeks a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge and fill the Duck River.

In a report on its investigation of the project, the committee calls the Columbia Dam "a relic of a bygone era in which dams were almost invariably viewed as synonymous with progress."

It added, however, that the Columbia Dam "continues to haunt TVA." The report said that, because the authority refused to provide Congress with information to make a decision on alternatives, the subcommittee had been forced to undertake the investigation.

The finding that the completion of the dam is not in the public interest, the report said, "is based in part on TVA's own heretofore undisclosed determination that the original project benefits can be obtained without the dam, without destroying 54 miles of river, without eliminating 13,000 acres of farmland and at a favorable cost-benefit ratio."

The report said the completion of the dam would destroy 27,000 acres, including farmland and wildlife habitat, and would create an artificial lake that would turn into thousands of acres of mudflats for half the year. The report said the dam would not "provide a single benefit that cannot be met by an alternative proposal fashioned by the TVA staff," adding, "That alternative, moreover, could be achieved at savings of at least $53 million."

The report also said that continued construction of the dam threatened "a major confrontation with the Endangered Species Act," such as the dispute over the Tellico Dam. Several endangered species of fresh-water mussels are found only in the Duck River.

It also said the TVA had failed to cooperate with other federal agencies with responsibility over water projects and had appeared to view federal environmental laws only as obstacles.

The report said that many of the abuses by the agency with regard to the Columbia project had predated the appointment of the two Freemans to the board of the agency. It added, however, that they had failed to analyze objectively the project after they were in charge. Freeman, the chairman, broke a personal commitment by that failure, the report said.

Freeman denied all of the allegations. The report did not suggest any adverse criticism of the agency or its directors in other endeavors.

7-Member State Panel To Decide Fate Of Duck River Reservoir

NFP 12-14-80 p.A17

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UPI) — The fate of TVA's efforts toward turning 54 miles of the Duck River into a reservoir, presently at a dead standstill, will be placed in the hands of a seven - member state panel Monday.

The marathon session before the State Water Quality Control Board will, in many respects, be a trial on merits of the Columbia Dam, a project that has already cost $57 million in the seven years since it was launched.

The project, which will cost at least another $100 million to complete, has already survived challenges ranging from presidential opposition to problems with the Endangered Species Act because of a threatened species of mussel.

Both sides of the controversy say they are optimistic going into the hearing, which will likely continue until sometime in January.

Opponents say the proposed lake would be little more than a giant, stagnant, smelly pond, full of green algae in the summer and marred by huge mud flats in the winter. It would, they say, destroy farmland and wildlife habitat with little benefit either to the economy or flood control.

Proponents, on the other hand, see a clean, sprawling reservoir full of fishermen, swimmers and water skiiers, its shores rimmed with new industry yet with plenty of room remaining for wildlife. Dangerous flooding would be stopped, they say, and the water supply for muncipalties will be improved.

Precisely, the Water Quality Control Board will decide whether to issue a certification permit for the project. With hearing officer Bill Bates presiding, the seven board members may hear from more than 50 witnesses.

The certification is necessary before the Army Corps of Engineers will grant a so-called "404" permit for dredging in the stream. TVA needs the Corps' permit before it can resume work on the project, now about 35 percent complete and at a standstill for months.

Arguably, the momentum has turned in the environmentalists' favor. Getting a hearing before the board was, in itself, something of a victory for the dam's opponents.

And, within the last few weeks, a House subcommittee has issued a report calling the project a waste of money while a state-commissioned report declared water quality in the proposed reservoir would be at "undesirable levels."

Frank Fly, a Murfreesboro attorney representing the anti-dam forces, says the environmentalists have witnesses to show the project would cause far more harm than good, with ill effects ranging from possible danger for public water supplies to destruction of valuable farmland.

But Lon MacFarland, a Columbia attorney and leader of the pro-dam Upper Duck River Development Agency, says the witnesses in favor of the project will show that water quality may actually be improved by the dam while economic benefits would be enormous.

Bates said the hearing will be divided into two parts. First, the panel will decide whether the project would degrade the water quality and, if so, the extent of the degradation and whether state and federal standards would be violated.

"The board could make a decision after the first phase," said Bates.

After the first phase, the board could decide that water quality would be so severely damaged that the certification should be denied or rule that there would be no damage and grant the permit.

But in all probability, sources say, the board will likely come down somewhere between the two extremes. The hearing will then go into a second phase, probably beginning in January after a holiday recess, with the board deciding whether the benefits justify the water degradation.

The water quality problems, according to Fly, are serious enough to pose a threat to human health.

Maury County, a center for phosphate mining, has a high natural concentration of phosphorous in its soil, which leaches into the Duck River and other streams. Chlorine used in treating public water supplies, Fly said, interacts with the phosphorus to create tri-halomethanes, a cancer-causing chemical.

He said the levels of this chemical in Columbia's water supply are already higher than EPA standards allow. The reservoir would mean an increase in phosphorous concentrations and, consequently, a higher content of tri-halomethanes in treated water, he said.

The high natural phosphorous content is also cited by the environmentalists as a factor in predictions of heavy algae growth in the Columbia reservoir.

Fly, a Columbia native, said TVA's own figures show that only 80 cents of benefits would be derrived from each dollar spent on the Dam.

Asked if that figure was valid, TVA spokesman Louis Gwin said, "I'm not going to characterize it."

He said the figure came out of a study three years ago at the time President Carter included the dam on his so-called "hit list" of water projects that should not be funded. Congress subsequently beat down Carter's efforts and continued funding.

Gwin did say the figures were based on data that included the Normandy Dam, located on the Duck River upstream from Columbia, and not solely on the Columbia project.

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Columbia Dam Algae Admitted Problem

NQR 12-18-80 P-1

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UPI) — A chief of TVA's water quality division says the agency could not keep algae growth in the proposed Columbia Dam reservoir out of downstream water supplies.

The surprise testimony of Bruce Brye is contrary to the prior contention of TVA that water released from the reservoir into the Duck River would not contain any algae.

"I believe there will be algae occuring in the proposed lake which could result in filter clogging and taste and odor problems in downstream municipal supplies," Brye said.

He said the conclusion was based on a new study conducted this year on water in the Normandy Dam, located on the Duck River upstream from Columbia. The study found much greater concentrations of algae in all depths of the Normandy reservoir than originally anticipated.

Brye testified before the state Water Quality Control Board, which is conducting a hearing on whether it should issue a certification to the $158 million project, now stalled for months. The hearing is expected to continue until sometime in January.

"We're operating on the premise that what has occurred at Normandy will be the typical things we might expect at Columbia," Brye said. "And it now appears we could not have complete isolation of algae from downstream water — as we thought we might be able to have."

Brye said, however, he thinks towns like Columbia, which get their drinking water from below the proposed dam, can successfully modify their water treatment process to cope with any problems caused by the algae.

TVA deputy general counsel Lew Wallace said the testimony "is really nothing new."

"What we've been saying all along is that we can minimize the algae problems from the dam and we're still saying it," Wallace said.

Environmentalists have pointed to algae problems as one reason the water quality in the reservoir — and downstream — would not be an acceptable level.

Costs Outweigh Benefits for Columbia Dam

By Libby Wann
Times Staff Writer T2-8-83 RB3

TVA's beleaguered Columbia Dam project was dealt another setback over the weekend when officials released figures showing the dam returning less than 70 cents in benefits for every dollar spent.

In addition to showing costs outweighing benefits, the figures also reflected an increase of up to $38 million in the total price tag of the controversial dam, which will not generate any power.

Responding to a Freedom of Information Act request, TVA information director Craven Crowell said a benefit-cost ratio of 0.7 as computed by an employee who thought the Columbia Dam would cost $178 million.

"Since the date of the calculation the estimated capital cost has increased to between $203 million and $216.5 million," Crowell said. "We have not recalculated the resulting benefit-cost ratio, but it would undoubtedly be lower than the previous 0.7."

Restricted now to road and bridge work, TVA construction crews are not quite half finished on the 11-year-old project.

President Reagan, following President Carter's lead, omitted the Columbia Dam from his budget, released two weeks ago.

TVA has claimed the dam will provide flood control, a better supply of drinking water and a lake to attract industry and recreation for Maury County residents.

But opponents have said the dam will create a slimy reservoir and is an example of political pork-barreling.

TVA biologists are now deciding if a tiny mussel is threatened by the completion of the 16,000-acre reservoir, TVA spokesman Alan Carmichael said.

Over the years, the Columbia Dam has been halted by environmentalists, water quality officials and judges.

Financial problems hinder completion of Columbia Dam

By Libby Wann
Times staff writer T 4-3-84 p.B1

The controversial Columbia Dam is out of money, TVA officials said Monday, and the fate of the half-complete project is unclear.

But the outcome of 13-year-old, $236 million project will not be decided on environmental grounds, where the battle has raged for the last four years, TVA's environmental chief said Monday.

"I don't think that the Columbia Dam is a question of an environmental problem any longer. It's more a matter of the agency's decision as to whether they would or would not proceed with the dam," said Martin E. Rivers, TVA's environmental director.

"At one point in time, our concern about the mollusks would have been a concern or a reservation about going ahead with the Columbia Dam. At least as it stands right now, that's not the case — at least inside TVA," Rivers said.

"Basically the problem is there is no money available to complete the dam. It would take $160 million to complete it and we don't have funds for that," said TVA's information director Craven Crowell.

Asked if the Columbia Dam is a sensitive issue to discuss, Crowell said, "Yes."

Last week Rivers told the Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service that TVA has finished its mollusk conservation program. The letter, which becomes public today, said TVA has more important projects than the Columbia Dam.

"More than $8 million and several years would be necessary to provide all the analyses and fieldwork you desire to make a determination on 'likely success' (of the, mollusk transplant program)," Rivers said in his letter. "Furthermore, the TVA budget ... is not sufficient to fund our higher priority non-power programs and at the same time the completion ... now estimated at $160 million."

For four years the Columbia Dam on the Duck River has been stalled by a Fish and Wildlife Service order that TVA successfully transplant a suspected endangered mussel from the Duck River to other rivers. Rivers' letter said the tranplant program must now be judged by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"There has been some success in the transplant," Rivers said.

The Columbia Dam is a massive, half-completed gray concrete structure looming over pastures at the edge of the small city of Columbia. The dam is not a power producer. It was intended to improve the water supply, economic climate, flood control and recreation.

Opponents charge the project will result in a lake filled with slimy green mold, and is an unneeded boondoogle that would benefit few business and industrial interests.

TVA has spent $76 million on the project so far.

TVA plans to re-evaluate dam's benefit

T 5-7-85 pB-2

The Associated Press

KNOXVILLE — The Tennessee Valley Authority is preparing a new benefit-cost analysis for the $240 million Columbia Dam, which has been stalled since September 1983 pending the success of a plan to save an endangered species of mussels.

TVA will be seeking public comment after the study is finished, and both the analysis and public evaluations will be presented to the Office of Management and Budget, which asked for the study during budget discussions with TVA.

When the dam was originally funded in 1969, TVA estimated its benefits at $1 per $1 of cost. In a benefit-cost analysis prepared in 1977 the ratio had dropped to 80 cents of benefits per $1 spent.

But those studies were done under guidelines that included benefits for system and local flood control, water supply, recreation, shoreline development, transportation savings, redevelopment and enhanced employment.

OMB has asked that benefit guidelines in the new study be limited to flood control, water supply and recreation.

Given those restrictions and the rising cost of completing the dam, Bevan Brown, director of TVA's Division of Air and Water Resources, said Monday that "the likelihood of the benefit-cost ratio being higher than it was formerly is not good."

TVA hopes to have the new analysis completed in August and ready for presentation with the public evaluations to OMB by Sept. 30, officials said.

TVA spent $76 million on the 14-year-old dam before an endangered species of freshwater mussels was found on the Duck River and construction was halted. The power agency transplanted the mussels to other streams but must still prove the "likely success" of the program before work can continue.

TVA Asked To Consider Finishing Columbia Dam

NFP 8-10-85 P.M.S

WASHINGTON (UPI) — U.S. Rep. Bill Boner, D-Tenn., has called for the Tennessee Valley Authority to reconsider completing the abandoned Columbia Dam project in Middle Tennessee.

Boner, a member of the Appropriations subcommittee on energy and water development, wrote a letter to TVA Chairman Charles Dean, requesting a review of the project, east of Columbia, Tenn., in Maury County.

"Recently, there has been a renewed interest in the possible completion of the Columbia Dam project," Boner wrote Wednesday. "Events taking place indicate the potential for substantial economic and industrial growth in the Middle Tennessee area."

The recent decision of General Motors Corp to locate its $3.5 billion Saturn auto plant in Spring Hill, near the project, has caused several state officials to question whether the dam should be resurrected sooner.

"As Tennessee's only member of the Appropriations Committee, I feel it is necessary to take a renewed look at the Columbia Dam project and how it impacts on that area in the future," Boner's letter to Dean continued.

"I am also asking for a status report on the construction project."

Boner represents the 5th Congressional District, adjacent to the 6th District, in which the dam is located.

TVA spent $40 million building the dam until an endangered species of mussel was found in the Duck River. Construction ground to a halt in 1983.

The project is hanging in limbo while TVA attempts to transplant the mussel to other streams.

The Columbia Dam was conceived for the purpose of flood control and water supply, TVA officials said. It was never intended to be a power-producing dam.

Bill Carroll, general manager of the water supply utility that serves most of Maury County, said he believes the demand for water will double in the next 10 years since GM picked Spring Hill for the Saturn plant.

The auto plant will need between 3 million and 5 million gallons of water a day to keep it operating.

But TVA officials — increasingly sensitive to criticism — in recent years have been less than enthusiastic about completing the Columbia Dam, mainly because a 1977 cost benefit study concluded the project would generate only 80 cents in benefits for every $1 spent to complete it.

John Furgurson, TVA project manager for the dam, said it would take another $160 million and six years of construction work to finish the project, begun in 1973.

Boner's Appropriations subcommittee on energy and water development is responsible for funding TVA's non-power budget.

The Columbia Dam project has been funded by congressional appropriations.

Finishing Columbia Dam May Have Dollar Payoff

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UPI) — For every dollar spent on completing the TVA Columbia Dam, there will be $2.30 in benefits returned in jobs, recreation and water quality, a cost/benefit study says.

The study, released Friday, was completed by the Upper Duck River Development Agency, which has worked for construction and completion of the project for 20 years.

Officials based their benefit-cost study on an estimated $105 million needed to finish the project. They hope the results of the study will encourage TVA to finish the dam, which was abandoned when it was half-completed.

Construction on Columbia Dam began on the Duck River in 1973 and came to a halt in 1981. At that time, environmentalists said continuing construction would endanger two rare species of mussels living below the dam. UFP 10-19-85 p. A3

The original proposal for the project called for a second dam to be built, with reservoirs for each. Normandy Dam was finished in 1976.

"For unknown and unexplained reasons related to sound economic principles, we assert that TVA has substantially understated the real net economic benefits that would favor the Columbia Dam," Steve Parks, the UDRDA executive secretary, said.

Parks said Columbia and surrounding counties will reap $24.7 million in benefits annually, as opposed to $10.7 million annual expense over the next 50 years to finance the completion of the dam.

TVA studies issued in 1981 and 1983 showed that the cost of completing the dam would exceed its benefits. By the end of the month, TVA plans to release the results of another cost-benefit study.

TVA based its study on a total project cost of $240 million, including $160 million to complete the dam, Parks said.

The UDRDA study says the estimated figure for new jobs, or "enhancement of labor," to be created by the completion of the project is $2.03 million, only slightly greater than TVA's.

Duck River Development study results show that $8.4 million of improved water quality would be the major benefit of completing the dam. The TVA study did not see improved water quality as a factor because state and TVA officials have stated that water in the river is satisfactory.

Columbia Dam costs far outweigh benefits, new TVA study claims

T11-21-85 p. B4

By Kristi Umbreit
The Associated Press

KNOXVILLE — Completion of the Columbia Dam near the planned site of General Motors Corp.'s Saturn car plant would yield only 40 cents for every dollar invested, a Tennessee Valley Authority study released Wednesday says.

The study also concluded that without the controversial dam an adequate water supply exists for the $3.5 billion automotive plant in Spring Hill.

TVA's findings conflict with those of a local group which last month showed completion of the dam would net $2.30 in benefits for each dollar spent.

Sen. James Sasser, D-Tenn., was quick to criticize TVA's findings. "The truth is that if TVA had fully supported the project it would be nearing completion now and the cost-benefit numbers would be very different," Sasser said.

TVA, which compiled its study at the request of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, figures finishing the dam would cost $159 million over the next six years, TVA spokesman Alan Carmichael said.

TVA already has spent $80 million on the half-finished dam, estimated in 1973 to cost $50 million.

Construction of the dam began in 1973 as part of a two-dam project on the Duck River to supply water and provide flood control and recreation to a four-county area.

The Normandy Dam was completed in 1976, but since then, increased construction costs and environmental issues have interrupted work on the Columbia Dam. Construction was halted in 1983.

Skyrocketing construction costs are the main reason for the drop in cost-effectiveness, said Jack Furgurson, project manager for the Columbia Dam.

In addition, under federal guidelines set in 1983, the new study could not include secondary benefits, such as new employment spurred by the dam's completion, he said. A 1977 study included such benefits, he said.

Furgurson said there is enough water in the Duck River to operate the new plant.

"The bottom line is, we think there's enough flow in the river to take care of their needs," he said.

TVA wants to transfer 12,800 acres to state

The Associated Press T 12-3-97 P. B 4

COLUMBIA, Tenn. — Thousands of acres in Maury County once designated for a dam on the Duck River should be given to the state, the Tennessee Valley Authority said Tuesday.

After months of study and public meetings, TVA announced the 12,800 acres should be protected, and used for public recreation and as a water supply.

"This alternative benefits the largest number of people," TVA Chairman Craven Crowell wrote in a letter to Gov. Don Sundquist.

Before the land is transferred, the state Building Commission must approve a plan to be prepared by the state on how the land will be used.

The state plan will stress the water supply needs of the area, including Marshall, Maury and southern Williamson counties, Sundquist advisor Justin Wilson said.

Other options for the land that TVA considered were selling it at a public auction, selling most of the land while keeping between 2,300 to 4,200 acres in public hands, or doing nothing.

"The state is in the best position to determine the uses of these public lands to meet the needs of our citizens," Sundquist said.

TVA was nearing completion on the Columbia Dam in 1983 when protests from environmentalists led to abandonment of the project. The dam would have created a lake for use as a water supply and for flood control.

The TVA is recommending 6,800 acres be under the most restrictive protection with limited public use, 2,200 acres be opened for recreation and residential development, and 3,800 acres be used for the water supply project.

"This strategy makes sense for all the parties involved in the process," Crowell wrote.

TVA abandoned the dam after years of court battles with environmentalists because of two endangered species of river mussel and one endangered clover on the land.

After spending $80 million on construction, court battles and attempting to relocate the endangered species, the TVA surrendered, saying it had calculated it would make 40 cents for every dollar spent on the project.

The land is located about 40 miles south of Nashville.

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TVA Crews Dismantle Unfinished Columbia Dam

After 16 Years, Anger Returning for Uprooted Residents; Town Still Seeks Water Supply

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BY MARTA W. ALDRICH
The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Tenn. — On a chigger-infested basin along the Duck River, bulldozer-size hydraulic hammers chip away at 26,000 cubic yards of concrete that for 16 years have stood as a monument to failure.

The Columbia Dam was a bitter pill to swallow for hundreds of people who saw their families uprooted and homesteads bulldozed to make way for the Tennessee Valley Authority project.

Now, TVA is dismantling the unfinished dam and the anger has returned.

"If they bought that land to build a dam, they should have built a dam," said Patricia West, whose 156-acre farm was among 12,800 acres acquired for the project.

"To think that it was all for nothing, it's sad. My heart is still broke," said Mrs. West, 73.

TVA spent about $83 million on the dam between 1969 and 1983, when the project was halted over environmental concerns. The dam's concrete portion was more than 90 percent complete and the project as a whole was nearly half done.

Local supporters held out hope work would resume one day, especially since projections show the area around Columbia, 40 miles south of Nashville, will need a new water source by 2035.

But as environmental issues lingered and construction costs escalated, it became clear the project never would be finished.

Except for occasional vandals and rappellers, the site was mostly abandoned until June 1, when workers returned to tear the dam down.

TVA cited safety among its reasons for the demolition — people fall off dams from time to time — but the price tag also was prohibitive. Construction and land expenses have skyrocketed since 1967, when the dam was projected to cost $50 million. Officials estimate completion now would require another $200 million.

So, each weekday from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., hydraulic hammers flake off 15 cubic yards an hour. The "peck, peck, peck" can be heard several miles away. Demolition should be finished by January.

"It's like mowing your grass," TVA project manager Dan Ferry said. "You just have to start in one corner and keep mowing until it's done."

TVA will have spent another $2.4 million once the dam is dismantled and broken rock used to reshape the basin to resemble the original site.

"We're trying to leave this land in as good a shape as we can. We've irritated people enough around here already," Ferry said.

Pork-barrel politics?

TVA, created in 1933 as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, built a string of power-producing and flood-controlling dams in Tennessee and Kentucky through the 1940s. For the most part, they transformed the character of the flood-prone Tennessee Valley and made large-scale economic growth possible.

Less well received were TVA tributary dams like Columbia that came in the 1960s and '70s. Their goals weren't electricity production but local economic development, drinking water and recreation.

Local business leaders envisioned the Columbia Dam as a precursor to industrial growth for the four-county region. They formed the Upper Duck River Development Association in 1964 and lobbied U.S. Rep. Joe L. Evins, D-Tenn., chairman of the powerful House subcommittee on public works and friend of Columbia banker and dam proponent Lon MacFarland.

Evins secured the first funding in 1969 for a two-dam project on the Duck River that would begin with a Normandy reservoir and finish with the Columbia Dam 100 river miles to the north.

"He just thought it would be a great benefit to that area," recalled Robert Moore Jr., who worked for the late congressman in the early 1960s.

> "We're trying to leave this land in as good a shape as we can. We've irritated people enough around here already."
>
> —Dan Ferry
> TVA project manager

Attorney Frank Fly, who represented environmental groups and farmers opposing the project, saw it as pork-barrel politics at its worst.

"The definition of pork barrel is the taking of money from the masses and giving it to a few in the name of a government project. The few who were going to get money at Columbia were in favor of this project. Everyone else was against it," he said.

Fly believes TVA was dragged unwillingly into the job. The agency conducted three feasibility studies, in 1933, 1951 and 1966, that recommended against building the dam.

However, the last study was revised and presented a more favorable case, showing $1.20 of benefits for every $1 of cost and setting the stage for federal funding.

TVA began acquiring land on the outskirts of Columbia, forcing property owners to sell or face condemnation.

"They'd say, 'If you don't like

what we give you, you can hire a lawyer,'" recalled Buddy Derryberry, whose parents' country store was snapped up in the land rush.

"After that, the elderly folks were never the same. It destroyed them. I remember seeing 80-year-old people just sit down and cry like a baby 'cause they didn't want to leave home."

Environmentalists pounced on the Columbia project. They said the dam would turn the Duck River into a murky, algae-filled lake unsuitable for drinking water, industrial use or recreation.

They mailed small bottles of smelly green water to Tennessee's congressional delegation, took the matter to federal court and managed to get several construction delays, raising the ire of local supporters who saw the environmentalists — mainly out-of-state groups — as interfering in local matters.

But the courts — and later federal and state boards — eventually sided with TVA and allowed the project to proceed.

The momentum shifted by 1977 when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service added a number of freshwater mussels to its list of endangered species, including two in the Duck River: the birdwing pearly mussel and the Cumberland monkeyface pearly mussel. It determined the mussels would be jeopardized if the dam was completed. Efforts to transplant the inch-long creatures in other streams were unsuccessful.

"That pretty well sunk us there," Ferry said.

Water supply sought

In Columbia, seat of the fifth fastest-growing county in Tennessee and home to the Saturn car plant, business leaders remain disappointed.

"The dam represented our future," City Manager William Gentner said. "Without a good water supply, we're at the whim of Mother Nature. And I have yet to see a city grow without ample water."

Columbia resident Ralph Meece is more direct.

"There will be a time when Columbia will be thirsty and stinky," said Meece, who joined two dozen protesters outside the demolition site in June. "I'm not for going out and destroying nature, but there's no common sense, logic or practicality in the Endangered Species Act. At this rate, human beings will be the endangered species."

Chamber of Commerce President Tony Beyer said most locals backed the dam in the early years but he acknowledged support eroded.

"I think people just got tired of hearing about it," Beyer said. "The only enthusiasm lately has been over what to do with the land now that they're tearing down the dam. Everybody has their own idea."

TVA has recommended transferring all 12,800 acres to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to manage. Some land would be for public use, including sites for two schools, a fire hall, civil defense training center and recycling station. Part would be reserved for another potential water supply project. And a fraction would go for residential use.

"Everybody can't win completely, but hopefully they can find a piece in it for them," Ferry said.

Meantime, former landowners and their heirs are suing TVA in federal court to reclaim their land. They are awaiting an appeals court ruling following a District Court judge's dismissal of the case last spring.

Patricia West is among the 125 people listed in the complaint. She wants back the farm where she and her husband raised three children and tended cattle, tobacco and hay for 23 years.

"No one will ever know the strain and hardship this put on us," said Mrs. West, whose husband died of a heart attack six years after the move.

"I've cussed and cried and done everything. I just wish my husband was still here to help me fight for it again. If I could get that land back, I'd die happy."



The Associated Press

Larry Radford, a job foreman with TVA, walks by the Columbia Dam near Columbia, Tenn., which is being torn down 16 years after construction was halted.