'Risk Analysis' Planned For St. Lawrence River

Plans are underway to expand the inventory of environmentally sensitive areas and carry out a "risk analysis" of environmental emergencies in the Upper Lakes and the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers.

Such a program has already been carried out jointly by the International Joint Commission's Great Lakes Water Control Board with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment to carry out such a program in the Great Lakes Basin.

A Lake-Erie Lake Ontario inventory has been completed.

Data gathered includes fish and wildlife areas, recreation water uses, water supplies (intakes), major transportation corridors and major manufacturing and storage facilities of oil and other hazardous materials.

Results identifying high risk areas on maps will be used by those who plan and perform clean up of spills of oils and toxic substances.

The International Joint Commission's Great Lakes Water Quality Board, which met at Montreal Dec. 3 and 4, and were given briefings on two major electrical power studies, focused attention on use of water quality objectives, under United States-Canada Agreement, particularly the temperature and radioactivity objectives, as external constraints on the planning efforts of both nations.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency reported the results of the recent national conference on PCB's (polychlorinated biphenols) held in Chicago. Conclusions of the conference are that PCB's are a definite threat to human health, that fish in many rivers and lakes throughout North America continue to exceed food contamination standards (federal tolerance limits), that the Great Lakes fishery is especially endangered, that environmentally safe substitutes appear to be available for some uses, and that neither federal government has effective legislation to control environmental pollution by PCB's and other toxic substances.

The recent Canadian action by National Health and Welfare declaring the PCB tolerance limit in fish for human consumption to be 2.0 ppm was reported.

The Board supported the action of the Governments, but reaffirmed its resolution that the International Joint Commission intercede with the United States Government to effect speedy passage of one of the toxic substances bills under consideration in Congress. It was reported that the Canada Environmental Control Act has been approved by the House and Senate. Michigan, New York, and Ontario advised of specific industrial control programs on PCB's.

The Board and five of the Commissioners were given briefings on the status of two major electrical power studies. One was by Dr. Arthur Porter, chairman of Ontario's Royal Commission for Electrical Power Plant Planning; the other by Dr. Robert Jaske of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Dr. Porter explained the terms of reference of the study. In essence, the Royal Commission made up of a consumer, communicator, industrialist, economist and educator, is to examine power concepts and alternatives for 1983-93 and beyond including land use planning to set up a framework to mesh electrical power planning, regional land use planning and public review processes. The result is to be policy guidelines which can be used by the government of Ontario as a base for decisions so that the need for reexamination of issues at future hearings on specific details; e.g. siting, rates etc. can be alleviated.

To accomplish the terms of reference, the Royal Commission is holding thirteen public meetings around the Canadian side of the Basin. Over 100 written statements and many oral presentations have already been received.

Next March the Royal Commission will begin 7 to 8 weeks of two day meetings with Ontario Hydro to gain information relating to the company's plans. Beginning in May or June the Royal Commission will be meeting with Ontario government Ministries to gain facts about their planning.

The National Energy Act (Oct. 1974) authorized a study in the United States of nuclear energy systems with particular attention to the practicability and feasibility of the concept of nuclear energy centers.

Dr. Jaske defined nuclear energy centers as "geographic aggregates of nuclear power units of fuel cycle facilities or both, much larger than those planned" to date. He said that the practicality of the center concept was being examined from many viewpoints including societal, economic, defense, jurisdictional and safety. Feasibility aspects under study include transmission and siting issues among many others.

To focus clearly on the issues, four surrogate sites were listed and studied to determine potential problems which could be encountered anywhere in the United States. The locations chosen are an Atlantic Ocean site in New Jersey, a Tennessee site, a Colorado site and one on the St. Lawrence River in New York State.

The Regulatory Commission's report to Congress is due in January.

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