

Vermont Environmental Report

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DICKEY-LINCOLN:

The President's Action Makes It an ISSUE

Suddenly, -- with President Carter's February 23rd budget recommendation to Congress to delete funds for the massive Dickey-Lincoln hydroelectric project in Maine, an issue that has been smoldering, has broken out into open flame.

That issue, now swiftly carried into the forefront of New England regional and national debate is this: whether or not the money for planning and engineering studies for Dickey-Lincoln should continue to be appropriated, whether or not the Dickey-Lincoln project should go on to construction, and whether the environmental leadership offered to Congress by President Carter will eventually be overturned.

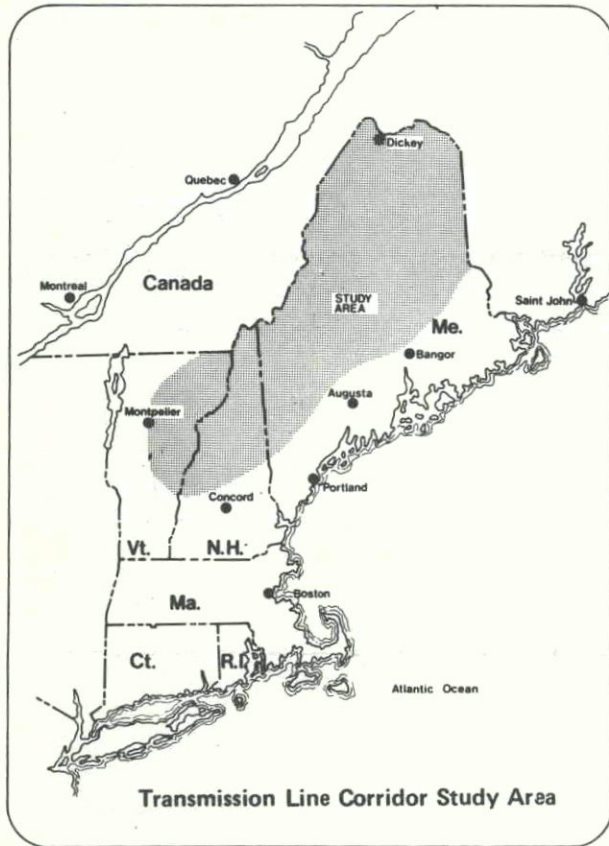
On the very day that President Carter announced his budget recommendations to delete the funds for Dickey-Lincoln and 18 other water resource projects across the nation, his Secretary of the Interior, Cecil D. Andrus, explained the meaning of this action to a House Interior Committee. This is what Andrus said: "I ask you to bear in mind that there have been no permanent decisions about these projects and we have not requested any de-authorizations and will not do so until a thorough review of each project has been completed."

Despite this explanation, even the suggestion that

the President was preparing to re-evaluate the merits of the 19 water resource projects, including Dickey-Lincoln, touched off a storm of protest from angered developers, special interest groups and a howl of outrage from the water-parched western states. This wave of protest broke across the White House and the new Administration in a fast-moving series of events.

Maine Senators Muskie and Hathaway and Maine Congressman Cohen re-iterated their call for continued appropriations in the new Fiscal Year, \$700,000, to complete the review of Dickey-Lincoln under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. Senators Muskie and Hathaway and members of Congress from the affected states sought, and got, a meeting with President Carter to discuss the situation. It was reported that the President was holding firm in his determination to re-evaluate the projects. On Thursday evening, March 10th, the same day of the meeting with the President, on a 65-24 vote, in a "sense of the Senate" resolution, the U.S. Senate recorded its intention to go ahead with the water resource projects. The message from the Senate was that they would support the water projects when these projects are considered as a part of the Fiscal Year 1978 budget.

Dickey-Lincoln



Transmission Line Corridor Study Area

The Senate action was not substantive in itself because monies already appropriated are being spent, and future monies have still to be acted on. But it did reveal the sentiments of the upper chamber, and it was a sharp rebuff to the declared aims of the President as he seeks to measure the worth of the individual water resource projects.

If the Congress finally decides to go ahead with planning and engineering design funds for the Dickey-Lincoln project, the studies currently underway will be completed. Here is the timetable. In June, 1977, the Army Corps of Engineers will complete its "Draft Environmental Impact Statement" on the project's dams and associated structures. Public hearings on the "Draft" will follow. In November, 1977, the Department of the Interior will issue its "Draft Environmental Impact Statement" on the trans-

mission line corridor that must be built as a part of the project. Also coming up is the report of a citizens' advisory committee that is to make a recommendation to Maine's Governor James Longley, for or against the project, sometime in June. If Congress continues to vote funds for the planning and engineering studies, if Dickey-Lincoln gains the support of Governor Longley and passes the environmental hurdles, it is conceivable that a request for construction funds could be lodged with the U.S. Congress as early as 1978.

This is the scope of the project, a \$625 million public works enterprise that has been on and off the drawing boards since the early 1950's and has been described as the largest ever in New England. There would be two dams on the St. John River in northern Maine. The first dam, near Dickey, Maine, would rise to a height of 334 feet; it would be more than two miles long. The second dam, eleven miles downstream at the Lincoln School site, would be 95 feet high and would extend for a width of 2200 feet. These dams together would flood some 88,000 acres (nearly 140 square miles) of land.

This is what distresses outdoor enthusiasts, timbercutters and environmentalists. The flooded land is presently valued for fishing, hunting, canoeing, timber harvesting and wilderness recreation. Bill Riviere, a columnist for the *Boston Sunday Globe*, has estimated that the worth of the wood alone on the affected land, harvested on a sustained yield basis, would amount to \$36 million per year. This is to say nothing of the other values that would be lost permanently when the 88,000-acre tract was covered with water.

Advocates of the Dickey-Lincoln project led by the Army Corps of Engineers point to the energy yield from the two dams, an assured supply of "peaking power" for the entire New England region exclusive of Maine of 700 megawatts. The advantage of such a hydroelectric installation is its flexibility of response to peaking power requirements. When the television sets and electric ranges and air conditioners of Boston, Hartford, Portland, in short, the whole New England region, go on at about 5 or 6 p.m. at night, the power of Dickey-Lincoln can be released. As the Army Corps states: "It can run at