

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Diminished returns

Friends of the Crooked River believe Allen and Phyllis Arnett's July 12 letter ("Slam of hydropower generated no sense") was proof that if something is repeated often enough, people will believe it even if it is unproved.

Advanced Hydro Solutions and Metro Hydroelectric keep repeating the same tired and unproven statements concerning their proposal to invade and destroy parkland in order "to produce green energy on the Cuyahoga River." Let's be candid: They are proposing to use public land for the purposes of developing their own profit.

To accomplish that end, they keep repeating this mantra that they'll produce enough energy for 2,000 homes. As small as that number is, our calculation finds it very inflated. We believe the number will be much closer to 1,000 than to 2,000. But some 140,000 Summit County residents use Gorge Metro Park.

The companies say the project would reduce air emissions from coal plants. Our estimates are that this project will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by only 0.025 percent regionally. Hydroelectric production is consistent with the predictability of the flow of the river that powers it. The Cuyahoga is very unpredictable, especially in the summer, when the flow is often very low. And there's the real rub. Peak power needs are in the summer. So this project will produce very little energy - and mostly in the winter, when we don't need it.

And at best, it would benefit fewer than one-half of 1 percent of county residents at the expense of sensitive habitat in the urban core, the recreational and aesthetic experiences of park visitors, and water quality in the Cuyahoga River.

The Arnetts compared the Advanced Hydro proposal to some of the country's largest dams. Hoover Dam supplies power for 1.3 million people. The Glen Canyon Dam produces more than 250 times the power the Edison Dam proposal would produce. And the Grand Coulee Dam generates 6,480 megawatts; the Cuyahoga proposal would generate only 2.25 megawatts.

The Arnetts are comparing apple orchards with orange seeds.

Ordinarily, we are in favor of people making money. But not when it is at such a huge public sacrifice for so little public benefit. So we proudly support Metro Parks in opposing this project. And so do 14 Ohio government agencies; 14 local, state and national organizations; and scores of individuals.

I wonder how the Arnetts would feel if a utility company upgraded its facilities by digging up their yard, cutting trees or stringing higher-voltage lines across their property, much as is being proposed with the Edison Dam.

Elaine Marsh

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