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The Intermountain Power Project — 10 miles from Capitol Reef

Coal plant planners eye Southern Utah

by Ruth Frear

In the wake of Kaiparowits, another 3,000-megawatt, coal-fired power plant is planned for the canyon country of Southern Utah. It's the Intermountain Power Project (IPP), to be located 10 miles east of Capitol Reef National Park.

A Kaiparowits-sized controversy is arising to meet the power plant proposal. Project proponents claim that they are doing things right, that IPP would not be another dirty smokestack. Opponents contend that the fragile Southern Utah parks country and small Utah towns cannot stand the impacts of such massive industrialization.

The project would bring 11,000 people to Wayne County (pop. 1,600) and use 10 million tons of Utah coal and 50,000 acre-feet of water per year. The project package also includes a dam and reservoir, roads, railroad tracks, a power plant and buildings, a new town, and transmission lines to deliver electricity to Southern California, Utah, and Nevada.

The Intermountain Power Project began with the Intermountain Consumers Power Association, a consortium of Utah and Nevada municipal electric cooperatives and Rural Electrification Administration cooperatives, formed in 1957. In 1970 ICPA officials discussed power supply possibilities with representatives of the Kaiparowits and Huntington projects, but were unable to reach agreements. Deciding to produce their own power, ICPA in 1971 filed applications for water from the Escalante and Fremont rivers. Consortium officials met with California utilities in 1973, and in 1974 the Intermountain Power Project was initiated as a non-profit corporation.

According to Joseph Fackrell, IPP president and executive director of ICPA, "In order for it to be economical to get the transmission to California, we have to build a big plant."

IPP has proposed a plant bigger than any now in the country — 3,000 megawatts. Fifteen per cent of the power will go to Nevada and Utah and 85% to six Southern California cities.

Why a power plant 10 miles from a national park? IPP studied several possible locations. "The best, most economical site was the Escalante (River)," Fackrell says. "But because of our open planning process, and because of the guidance you (environmentalists) gave us, the first thing we did was to move out of Escalante. It cost us several million dollars to do that. We counted environmental concerns highest."

The only water available to IPP, outside of the Escalante, was in Wayne County. We looked at five sites in Wayne County," Fackrell says. "In balance, Salt Wash was the best location.

"You can't make a power plant look good, so we decided to put it out of sight, where it wouldn't do environmental damage." Nevertheless, the Salt Wash site, northwest of North Caineville Mesa, would be visible to hikers from such places as Cathedral Valley, Boulder Mountain, Thousand Lake Mountain, and the Henry Mountains.

Water for the project is to come from the Fremont River, which flows through Capitol Reef, and from 20 deep wells drilled into an underground aquifer just east of the park boundary.

FREMONT WATER

Hank Hassell, an environmentalist from Southern Utah, says, "The people of Utah don't have near the amount of water they thought," he says. "And there's no surplus in the Fremont. IPP has bought the winter runoff, and in a dry year the people in Wayne County won't get any water."

Hassell, a native of Utah and the son of an agricultural extension agent, fears for

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The Environmental Bi-Weekly

...h Country News

Friday, May 6, 1977 Lander, Wyoming

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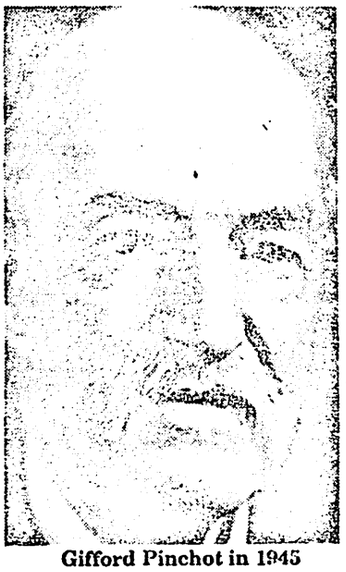
Seventy-five years later, the differences between preservationists and use-oriented conservationists still trouble the environmental movement. Pinchot, like many today, could understand greed; he couldn't understand the Muirs of the world. Pinchot's biography summarizes a stroll in the Grand Canyon with the founder of the Sierra Club: "And when we came across a tarantula, he wouldn't let me kill it. He said it had as much right there as we did," the utilitarian official said with wonder. The Forestry Division's first job, then, carried out with speeches and pamphleteering, was to convince the public that scientifically managed forests would be in the nation's long-term best interests.

To help, Pinchot organized the Society of American Foresters, whose influential members gathered in the bachelor's home to plan the future of conservation while munching on gingerbread, baked apples, and milk served by his mother. In support of its most famous member, the family contributed $150,000 to establish a forestry school at Yale — a school that would turn out a steady stream of Forest Service chiefs. In contrast to Fernow's sleepy agency, the division now sent out teams to demonstrate the advantages of applying scientific methods to private woodlands.

It was a crusade of bigger and better.



Gifford Pinchot in 1945
U.S. Forest Service photo

With the combination of aroused public awareness and Pinchot politicking, the division was upgraded to the Bureau of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture. In the meantime, the staff grew from 11 to 179 by 1901.

One large bone stuck in Pinchot's craw: he had the foresters but no forests. The federal reserves remained with the General Land Office of the Department of Interior, an agency with a poor record of public stewardship. Pushing for transfer to his control, the forester plunged into enemy territory. He lobbied among the sheepmen, the cattle barons, and the powerful Western Congressmen, striving to convince them that they would benefit from management of the federal lands they used.

What he said made a good deal of sense. Much of the West was a chaotic treasure house just broken open. Feuds were common, shootings not unusual, as men competed for resources. Viewing the clouds of

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IPP plant . . .

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the future of Wayne County farmers. "Those people really work together. They have a wonderful irrigation system — just sprinklers — and they don't waste a drop. With IPP and the reservoir, everything would be changed."

AIR QUESTIONS

The IPP Board in April 1976 passed a resolution which stated in part that "IPP is an economically and environmentally sound project, having selected a site such that prevailing winds would direct any emissions away from scenic and recreational areas."

Utah conservationists aren't reassured by that statement. If it is true, they believe it means that most pollution will be blown away from Capitol Reef and towards such scenic and recreational areas as the San Rafael Swell, Goblin Valley, the Henry Mountains, and Arches and Canyonlands National Parks.

Project participants expect 90% sulfur dioxide removal and 99.75% particulate removal, using "best practicable control technology" and supplementary control systems.

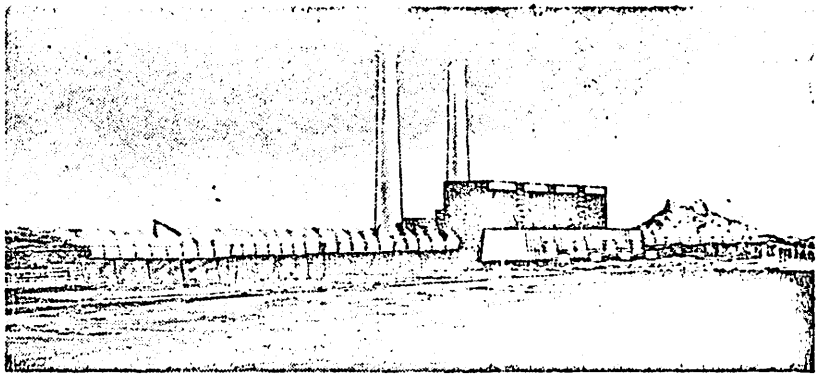
"Two years ago, you didn't have to put on 90% scrubbers and 99.8% precipitators," Fackrell says. "But we decided to go with what we thought would be best available. We've honestly tried to do what's right and reasonable and fair. But how do you convince people you're trying to do something different when they've seen so much bad?"

"We fear fiscal, social, and environmental impacts we cannot, of ourselves, face."

—South Eastern Utah Economic Development District

Fackrell claims there would be less deterioration from IPP than from the smaller Navajo plant near Page, Ariz. "Even

JOSEPH FACKRELL, president of Intermountain Power Project, switched the proposed power plant site from the Escalante River to the Fremont River in response to environmentalists' advice, he says.
Photo courtesy of IPP



INTERMOUNTAIN POWER PROJECT. The IPP coal-fired plant would be the largest of its kind in the country, producing 3,000 megawatts of electrical power. The proposed site is about 10 miles from Capitol Reef National Park.
Drawing courtesy of IPP

impacts of the Huntington and Emery power plants, the newcomers would need 2,100 housing units, two new elementary schools, and one new junior-senior high school.

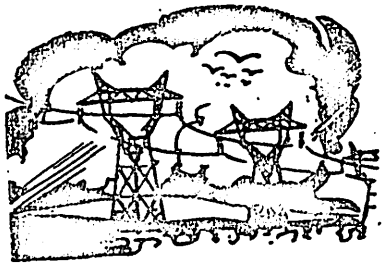
The power plant would also bring large numbers of people into the area. The estimated 11,000 newcomers to Wayne County generated by it would require 3,200 housing units, 90% of them trailers, according to IPP figures.

The increased population would need a water supply of 2.58 million gallons per day and produce 1.1 million gallons per day of liquid wastes and 2.58 million gallons per day of solid wastes. The 3,100 new students would need up to three new elementary schools, one new junior high, and one new high school. A new town is expected, occupying 1,000 acres of land and absorbing 85% of the new population.

"I talked to folks in Wayne County last summer," says Hassell, "and they don't realize what's going to happen to their communities. There will be 11,000 new people at the peak of construction, but then most of them will move out, leaving Wayne County high and dry. There will be wall-to-wall trailer houses, and the social and

was attributed to economic difficulties rather than directly to environmental opposition, however.

But environmentalists aren't the only ones worried about IPP. An association of local governmentsof Carbon, Emery, and



Grand Counties — the South Eastern Utah Economic Development District (SEUDD) — have told IPP officials: "We fear fiscal, social, and environmental impacts we cannot, of ourselves, face."

With none of the plant's tax revenues going to Carbon or Emery Counties, the district feels these counties cannot afford the huge population increase. SEUEDD executive William Dinehart says that the people already in this area would be subsidizing the project. It would take local money to build the roads, schools, and water treatment plants needed to handle the population surge.

THE SCHEDULE

Already complete is a five-volume "Preliminary Engineering and Feasibility Study" by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. In process is a Draft En-

any major financial commitments until the federal EIS is done and we have a decision from Interior." And, until California requirements are met, the Los Angeles municipal utilities are legally prohibited from making any commitments beyond those for feasibility studies.

Ruth Frear is a librarian at Marriott Library at the University of Utah and a well-known conservationist. She is also a free lance writer and photographer, devoting her efforts to preserving Utah's wild and scenic areas from destruction and industrialization. She is the Southwest Regional Vice-President of the Sierra Club and Legal Coordinator for the Utah Chapter. She has been a leader in efforts to stop the Kaiparowits Power Project and to preserve the Escalante Canyon Country as wilderness.

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Fackrell claims there would be less deterioration from IPP than from the smaller Navajo plant near Page, Ariz. "Even though we'll have four units, we're only using two stacks, so there will be better plume rise and dispersion. There would be few days when you'd be able to see anything at all."

Environmentalists are concerned about air quality in Capitol Reef National Park. Hank Hassell says that "You can't maintain a Class I airshed in Capitol Reef with a 3,000 megawatt power plant 10 miles away."

Indeed, at a 1976 press conference, Jim Anthony, IPP Project Engineer, stated that "the unrealistic standards of the proposed (Clean Air) legislation would prevent construction of the Intermountain Power Project because of its proximity to Capitol Reef."

According to Fackrell, the plant could meet Class I standards in the park "except for about 50 hours a year with sulfur dioxide. We wouldn't exceed Class I with particulates or nitrous oxides. And we would never exceed Class II standards anywhere, at any time."

Hassell wants to see the data. "I just don't believe somebody's going to build a clean power plant," he says. "I'm not convinced it's possible. And any deterioration at all of the air quality in that country would be tragic."

TRANSPORTATION, SOCIAL IMPACTS

Coal for the project is expected to come from underground mines in the Wasatch and Emery fields and will be shipped 50 to 65 miles by rail to the power plant.

Mining and shipping the necessary 10 million tons of coal per year would boost the population in Emery County (pop. 6,700) by approximately 7,300 and in Sevier and Sanpete Counties (combined pop. 26,300) by 8,200. In Emery County alone, which is already staggering from the

units would need an additional new elementary schools, one new junior high, and one new high school. A new town is expected, occupying 1,000 acres of land and absorbing 85% of the new population.

"I talked to folks in Wayne County last summer," says Hassell, "and they don't realize what's going to happen to their communities. There will be 11,000 new people at the peak of construction, but then most of them will move out, leaving Wayne County high and dry. There will be wall-to-wall trailer houses, and the social and agricultural costs will be staggering. You can't mitigate those impacts, you can't plan for them."

Hassell grew up in Price, Utah, just north of the Huntington power plant site, and laments the changes in that town since the plant came in and construction began on the Emery plant nearby. "I walked down the halls of my old high school and couldn't believe the vandalism. And all the trailers — it's like a different place; it's like a slum."

LEGAL ACTION

The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund and the Center for Law in the Public Interest are investigating possible legal action against the Intermountain Power Project. The two groups worked together against the Kaiparowits power project. Its downfall

the huge population increase. SEUEDD executive William Dineburt says that the people already in this area would be subsidizing the project. It would take local money to build the roads, schools, and water treatment plants needed to handle the population surge.

THE SCHEDULE

Already complete is a five-volume "Preliminary Engineering and Feasibility Study" by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. In process is a Draft Environmental Impact Report, required by the California Environmental Quality Act. The draft environmental impact statement required by the federal government is to be completed by the Interior Department in January 1978.

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HANK HASSELL, a Utah environmentalist, fears that local farmers will be left without water in dry years if the Intermountain Power Project is built.

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> Intermountain Power Project