

Committee on Resources

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TESTIMONY Of
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Before
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Committee on Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

At
Augusta, Georgia
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Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and Congressman Burns. I am Charles B. (Chuck) Manning Jr., senior vice president and chief operating officer of MEAG Power, a public generation and transmission corporation providing electric power to 49 Georgia communities that in turn supply electricity to almost three-quarters of a million citizens. About 20 per cent of this electricity comes from lower-cost hydro electric power that is generated at dams of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is marketed by the Southeastern Power Administration (SEPA). Electric customers pay for generation and transmission costs at these hydro projects and also repay appropriations for capital projects with interest.

We appreciate the opportunity to appear before your subcommittee to comment on H.R. 5044, the Federal Hydroelectric and Environmental and Enhancement Act, introduced by Representative Max Burns of the 12th District of Georgia and Representative Charlie Norwood of the Ninth District of Georgia. Your bill is of great interest to members of the Southeastern Federal Power Customers, an organization of rural electric cooperatives and municipally owned electric systems in Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.

We strongly support the environmental attributes of Hydro Power such as eliminating tons of SO₂, NO_X, and Mercury. The use of hydro during peaks conserves fossil fuel and reduces ozone during peak ozone periods. There are no fuel disposal issues associated with hydro. In an area of the country, such as the southeast, that has very few renewable resources, hydro is our "green" energy. Indeed, we would encourage Congress to classify all hydro energy as renewable, not just energy gained from increased efficiencies or new facilities.

MEAG supports this legislation. We will work with you, the Georgia delegation, the House Resources Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. We will cooperate with the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of the Army as they conduct their studies on the potential for increasing hydroelectric power production at existing federal facilities.

Furthermore, we strongly support your language that requires each secretary to work with the administrator of each power marketing administration as they proceed with their studies. We are confident that the power systems that provide not-for-profit power to millions of consumers will be active participants as the studies are carried out, not just when they are completed. Power system representatives are knowledgeable about generation and transmission and technological development. We have expertise in assessing environmental impacts on air, water, land recreation and other areas as we produce and transmit electricity.

As the nation attempts to solve its energy problems in the near future and even longer, many leaders often overlook the importance of the current installed hydro electric capacity that has provided billions of kilowatthours of electricity with minimal impacts on the nation's air quality.

Therefore, I urge you and other Members of Congress to make sure that the power generating agencies are adequately funded so 'they can maintain their dams and infrastructure, their hydro generating units so they

can improve output and reliability as they also provide navigation, flood control, water supply and recreation.

You can be assured, that the power customers will pay their fair share of these costs as they have in the past.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.