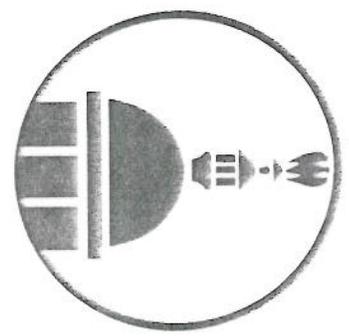


CONCORD MO



Concord, New Hampshire 167th Year, No. 293

20 Pages — 15c

F&G: Bow Plant 'Not Even Close' To

By TOM FERRITER
Monitor State News Service

The N.H. Fish and Game Department has charged that the Public Service Co. of N.H. is "not even close" to meeting heat-pollution standards at its generating station on the Merrimack River at Bow.

The fish and game charges that the power company's consistent violation of a 1969 thermal pollution permit could touch off a new confrontation between the department and Gov. Thomson concerning fish and game's authority to set water temperature standards for electric generating facilities.

The department has been complaining for at least a year that water discharged into the Merrimack River after being used to cool the coal-powered Bow plant is hotter than the 1969-permit allows and endangers fish life in the river.

Public Service now needs a new permit, and the fish and game position could force

costly thermal pollution control measures to be taken at the Bow facility.

The 1969 permit for the Bow plant, issued by the N.H. Water Supply and Pollution Control Commission (WSPCC), incorporated fish and game standards limiting the temperature of plant discharges to protect the habitats of both warm-water and cold-water fish.

The company now needs a federal permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and fish and game officials want the EPA to enforce roughly the same standards.

Arthur E. Newell, supervisor of fisheries research for the department, claims Public Service has "not even come close" to abiding by the 1969 standards.

Frederick D. Goode, Thomson's chief assistant for energy matters, told the WSPCC last week that the standards proposed by fish and game would impose "an economic burden" on Public Service

"that would indeed cause an increase in electric rates for users."

Goode noted Thomson's "very deep concern in this area" and said he wanted to "explore alternatives" to imposing the standards suggested by the N.H. Fish and Game Department.

Under state law, the department has authority to set heat discharges for electric generating plants.

When it attempted to impose strict heat-discharge limits on the proposed Seabrook nuclear power plants, fish and game found itself in a dispute with the WSPCC and Thomson. After a series of secret meetings, the department compromised on the issue.

Goode last week denied Thomson had demanded that fish and game retract the recommendations it had made to EPA regarding the pending permit for the Bow station.

But he said Thomson believed the department might be acting "outside the scope of its authority" in proposing such standards to the federal regulatory agency.

Donald W. Stever, chief of the attorney general's environmental protection division, has been asked to research the question of whether fish and game has the same authority to impose heat discharge standards for federal permits that it has for state-issued permits.

The standards proposed by fish and game for the federal permit are slightly more liberal for Public Service than those already included in the 1969 state permit for the Bow plant.

"The real question," according to one WSPCC staffer, "is whether they're violating the 1969 permit."

About this question there is some dispute. Public Service officials insist they are in compliance with the 1969 standards, but they also state that abiding by the more relaxed standards proposed for the federal permit could cost the company another \$4 million a year.

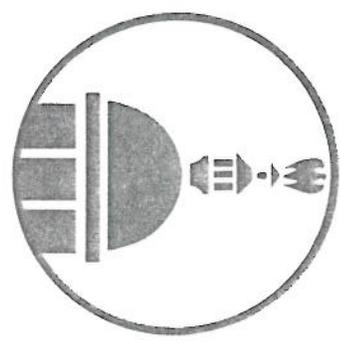
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The WSPCC staff, which is responsible for enforcing the 1969 permit terms, has reported no serious violations of heat discharge standards.

For cold-water fish, the 1969 permit allows Public Service to discharge cooling water into the Merrimack at no more than 5 degrees above the prevailing water temperature in the river, until the river temperature reaches 68 degrees. Above that level, no further rise in temperature is permitted.

Terrance P. Frost, in charge of enforcing the permit for WSPCC, says Public Service is "still in the stage of trying to comply" with the 1969 permit, although the permit gave the company until 1971 to meet heat discharge standards.

Frost acknowledged there may still be "technical violations" of the permit, but he said they pose no threat to fish life in the river.

Frost said the water temperature data WSPCC gets on the Bow station "could be better" and said "We're going to have to analyze the data more carefully."

Newell says Public Service consistently violates the terms of the 1969 permit discharging water into the Merrimack as much as 13 degrees warmer than the temperature of the surrounding water.

The fish and game department will be stocking Atlantic salmon in the river next spring, Newell said, and the Public Service discharges could make their survival impossible.

If Stever advises the WSPCC that the proposed fish and game standards for the EPA permit must be adopted, the fish and game department could find itself in hot water with Thomson.

Goode told the WSPCC last week that there was "a point of diminishing returns" in forcing power companies to spend money to meet environmental standards, and indicated Thomson would be displeased if the fish and game recommendations imposed an added economic burden on Public Service.

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