

To BAPE Review Panel:

I am writing with comments on the Environmental Assessment Process for the Romaine River Hydroelectric Complex. I am a concerned citizen in the U.S., and have family members who live in Vermont and upstate New York and purchase electricity from Hydro Quebec. Energy is a big concern in the States, and the status quo has not served our interests for a number of years. In short: we are looking for greater energy efficiency from existing sources, minimizing emissions, and maximizing energy independence ... but not at the cost of long term environmental impacts, social justice and the rights of indigenous people, and decision making that excludes key members of the public (those directly impacted by energy developments and those who consume energy).

To meet our future energy needs, we need to have broad public input, transparency of decision making, full consideration of alternatives, and a concerted effort to match energy conservation goals with new sources of clean and renewable energy. I have concerns about whether the Romaine River Hydroelectric Complex is justified on these grounds. In particular, I am most concerned whether the public has had an adequate chance to participate and become fully informed about the project. BAPE excluded Montreal and Quebec City as locations for public hearings (where many of the consumers of hydro power reside), and the proponent has not produced review and assessment materials in English (so that consumers of energy in the States can be informed about their contracts with Hydro Quebec, and fully understand the consequence of purchasing energy from across the border). The timeline for written and oral submissions has also been very short, which further prohibits participation. In addition, I am also concerned about the environmental merits/tradeoffs of proposal: loss of habitat for Atlantic Salmon, methane emissions from turbines, harm to endangered woodland caribou populations from access roads and high powered transmission lines, loss of recreational and tourism potential on free flowing rivers, impact to aquatic environment in the Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve at the mouth of the river, mercury contamination in the St. Lawrence Seaway, and more.

For these reasons cited above, I strongly oppose this project, and feel alternatives (such as wind power, energy conservation efforts, solar thermal, smaller run of the river developments, geothermal, bio fuels, and attention to the long term viability of renewable energy sources beyond hydro power) have yet to be considered, and can more than make up the difference for this ill conceived and unnecessary project.

Very best,
Interested Party

Ed Labenski