Dam, Valley Project Link Held Possible

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The possibility of combining the $65,000,000 Bonneville power plant and the $56,000,000 Willamette valley project into a development, one result of which might be a Portland of 600,000 to 1,000,000 people, was abruptly impressed on the minds of United States engineer board whose members arrived in Oregon from Washington, D. C.

Four members of the board arrived early Saturday, disembarking from the Portland Rose at Bonneville where they were met by an official group headed by Colonel Thomas M. Robins, division United States engineer. The other two members reached Portland later in the day. It is the $500,000 Willamette valley study submitted by Colonel Robins with recommendation for adoption that is under review.

The first act of a strenuous three days dedicated to inspection of the valley, culminating with the formal hearing at Salem Monday, was to view the new, big power plant. Their stay in Portland was limited to luncheon at the Multnomah hotel, but they are to be here again for an informal dinner under auspices of the Portland Chamber of Commerce Monday evening.

Get an Idea, Anyway

The national engineers will get an idea of the magnitude of the Willamette valley project. They cannot, of course, see all the valley's 11,200 square miles and the 7,000,000 acres of valley floor or even its 28,273 farms covering 2,793,000 acres and valued at approximately $280,000,000. They will not have time to go into all the particulars of acute flood danger to farm lands and towns nor to see all of seven reservoir sites recommended for immediate construction. But they are viewing a cross section representative of the whole. They will hear the bristling array of facts and argument that in brief hold the valley is imperiled continuously by the possibility of flood proportionately as disastrous as the Ohio, Mississippi and Connecticut valley floods.

They will be told that a flood even like that of 1861 would paralyze the valley, its towns and its transportation, delay growth for years and pile up a bill for destroyed lives and prosperity that would make the cost of flood control seem small in comparison.

May Be Worth Much

They will be told that improvement of navigation might be worth $300,000 to $1,000,000 a year in the handling of timber from the reservoir of 50,000,000,000 feet, 11,500,000,000 of which belongs to the government, in the Willamette watershed. They will be told that supplemental irrigation will constitute the only way to put production in the Willamette valley on a competitive basis with other districts, this because of the extreme shortage of summer rainfall.

Robert H. Kipp, secretary of Willamette valley project, declared that not as many as 500 more families could be absorbed in the Willamette valley under existing conditions, but that with supplemental irrigation and the breaking of big farms into family-sized farms there will be new opportunity for 25,000 additional families.

The Willamette valley project is thus recommended for immediate construction as the western side of federal government's solution of the dust bowl problem. Although efforts are being made to keep as many families in the dust bowl as posible, 9000 families came to the Pacific Northwest last year and 10,000 families the first six months of this year, and at last report only 3200 of them had been permanently settled. By far the greater number of these 19,000 families came to Oregon.

Reservoir Sites

The seven proposed reservoirs to keep the crest of floods within the banks of the river are on the Coast fork of the Willamette, on Row river, at Lookout Point on the Middle Fork of the Willamette, at Quartz creek on the McKenzie, at Fern Ridge on the Long Tom, at Sweet Home on the South Santiam and at Detroit on the North Santiam.

The locks at Oregon City would be rebuilt. The river channel would be improved. Water would be supplied equal to the initial irrigation necessities of some 375,000 acres. But the heavy argument will be that floods now cost the Willamette valley an average of more than $1,000,000 a year, that on the average the loss would be $4,000,000 every fifth year without flood control, that a flood on an average of once every 30 years would cost $10,000,000 and render at least 100,000 people homeless.

"We can't go any farther in the growth and the development of the Willamette valley project," Kipp declared.

Finley Questions Effect of Valley Project on Fish

The $56,000,000 Willamette Valley project has been considered from only one angle and members of the board of United States engineers on rivers and harbors, now making a personal survey of the valley, should also give attention to the other phase, the effect the project will have on the state's fisheries, according to William L. Finley, naturalist and national vice president of the Izaak Walton league.

Studies already made of the project have been from the standpoint of flood control, irrigation, navigation and stream purification, but some consideration also should be given the salmon runs, which will be destroyed if dams are placed across headwaters of the Willamette, Finley said. The same opinion was voiced in a resolution passed by the Izaak Walton league at its state meeting several months ago.