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RICH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AGAINST HOOK CANYON PROJECT

Anita Weston/Rich County Times

At the Rich County Commissioners Meeting held April 2, 2008, the Commissioners determined that a resolution should be written and sent to the State of Utah indicating that they were not in favor of any action taken that would be detrimental to the tourist and recreation industry, would harm water quality, and damage the fishing industry. This decision was reached after some discussion with Dave and Claudia Cottle, the leaders of Bear Lake Watch. The Cottles indicated that with the amount of water that is planned to be moved daily and the flow rates required by the proposed Hook Canyon Project, there couldn't help but be a negative impact on the lake and the eco system.

The decision to write the resolution came after the Commissioners learned that FERK federal procedures are being followed which does not require that the County be informed or contacted by the Symbiotics, LLC, the company proposing the Hook Canyon Hydroelectric Plant. The FERK process is very formalized and follows a set procedure. The only time this process allows for public input is rapidly approaching. There is a meeting to be held on the 9th of April which will allow for verbal input. The next 30-day window will provide an opportunity for government bodies and individuals to voice their opinions for or against this project.

These time limits need to be strictly observed. The Federal Government as well as various agencies and two state governments involved will take the information gained in this process to begin to make their decision. If nothing is heard from counties, cities, and individuals before this time period elapses, it is understood that everything is favorable for the project. The County Commissioners had assumed that since this plant was being planned to be built within the County, that Symbiotics, LLC, would be required to present their plans before the County Planning and Zoning Committee as well as before the County Commissioners in order to obtain permission to build on County lands. This is the process that all businesses and individuals must go through in order to conduct business, build homes, and so forth within the County. The Federal FERK process, however, does not have to follow these steps.

The Commissioners were informed that Mike Styler, the Director of Natural Resources, had indicated that he hadn't heard anything from this part of the State in opposition to the project and was assuming that everyone in this area was okay with the project. The Cottles urged the Commissioners to represent this area and preserve the lake which is such a valuable resource in this area.