

Clean power from Gorge Dam

By David Sinclair, Advanced Hydro Solutions

The writer is the president of Advanced Hydro Solutions.

On May 8, the Beacon Journal published an editorial entitled "Battle of the Gorge" commenting on the hydroelectric project being planned by my company, Advanced Hydro Solutions, at the Gorge Dam. We believe important facts regarding this clean energy project were missing.

Advanced Hydro is a local Akron-based company. We have committed ourselves to developing projects that will provide clean renewable energy in a socially and environmentally responsible fashion. The Gorge project is one of a series of clean renewable energy projects we are undertaking in the next several years at dams in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina.

We are following the Integrated Licensing Process under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). As part of the licensing process we are spending more than \$350,000 with industry-leading environmental and engineering firms to complete a series of comprehensive studies on the possible impact of the project.

The assessments include aesthetics, involving the appearance, noise and odors, plus the socioeconomic and recreational impacts. We are looking at the protection of plants and wetland delineation. We are evaluating the grading and slope stability, plus the effect on the Indiana Bat, Bald Eagle, aquatic life and water quality, including minimum flow and the offsetting of flows from the Akron city combined sewer outlet in the project area.

Once these studies are complete, which is expected to be this fall, we will all be able to see and judge the impact of the project and compare it to the benefits it provides. The results of all these studies will be shared at public meetings. No land clearing or construction activities will take place before we receive a license from FERC, which is not expected before mid-2007.

Opponents of the project argue that the generation of 2.5 megawatts of power is not worthwhile when compared to the potential environmental impact. How can anyone draw such a conclusion when the impact in question has not yet been measured because the testing is still ongoing?

Certainly we have no plans or desire to damage the park or threaten any rare or endangered species if they exist in the project area. We don't want to dry up the Cuyahoga River.

Our country has a significant need for more clean, renewable energy. The nature of renewable energy projects is that any one project is not large, but each makes a contribution to reducing our dependence on foreign oil or burning more coal or natural gas. State legislators think it is important because 22 states (Ohio is not one of them) have enacted Renewable Portfolio Standards legislation to require utilities to generate an increasing percentage of their output from renewables, many imposing substantial penalties for not meeting those annual benchmarks.

To put this in further perspective, the city of Cuyahoga Falls has invested in a 7.2 megawatt wind farm in Bowling Green. Because water is a much more constant and reliable energy source than the wind our 2.5

megawatt Gorge hydro project will produce almost as many kilowatt hours of energy per year as that entire wind farm.

On April 20, Anne Applebaum, a columnist with the Washington Post wrote an article published in the Beacon Journal on the ``BANANAist" (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything) syndrome that bedevils developers of renewable energy projects and asks: ``... Are we really ready politically, to build any new energy sources at all?" Often it seems we are certainly not willing to have them in our own back yard.

We sincerely believe new Green Energy is an imperative for the future of our society. Hydroelectric power is among the greenest of the green, and we fully expect the environmental studies to show that this project will not only be environmentally acceptable but beneficial to our community. We owe our community at least the chance to first see the results of the studies before making conclusions.