

Metro/Region

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Group: Cost exceeds \$3M for Cheat access plan

By Lee Chottiner
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The cost of building the public recreation area on Cheat Lake envisioned by West Penn Power Co. could exceed \$3 million, according to leaders of a group following the issue.

The West Penn proposal also includes plans for a fishing area that its spokeswoman didn't mention.

According to Ann Chester, steering committee member of the Cheat Lake Environment and Recreation Alliance, West Penn estimates the cost of developing West

Penn Beach on the east shore of the lake at \$3.27 million and its proposed fishing area at the tail race of the hydro dam at \$290,000.

Patty Lantzy, West Penn supervisor of licensing for power engineering, wouldn't confirm the figures. "We don't have that information available right now," she said.

But Chester said the numbers are part of West Penn's proposal to federal regulators.

"This is what they (West Penn) submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as part of

their application," Chester said.

She didn't know why the utility wouldn't confirm the numbers. "That's interesting," she said. "I don't know the protocol there."

CLEAR has access to the figures because FERC granted it the same status as agencies, Chester said. "That means what CLEAR as a group proposes, West Penn needs to address just as if we were an agency like the DNR. We get all their information."

West Penn Power announced Tuesday it proposed a new plan to FERC to develop a strip of land near its hydro station on the state

line for recreation with boat docking facilities, a hiking/biking trail and picnic areas.

Lantzy did not mention the tail race part of the proposal when she spoke with the *Dominion Post*.

Under that proposal, Chester said, fishing facilities below the dam will be constructed — a fishing platform, a pedestrian ramp, parking lots "and downstream warning sirens and lights for when the flow (from the dam) changes."

The entire West Penn proposal will be discussed during a CLEAR

meeting at 7:30 p.m. Monday at the South Junior High School auditorium in Morgantown, CLEAR spokesman Steve Hollenhorst said.

West Penn, which owns Cheat Lake and West Penn Beach, must come up with an acceptable proposal for public recreation there before FERC will approve its application for relicensing its hydro station. The current license, issued more than 40 years ago, will expire this December.

Public access to Cheat Lake has been an issue for years as commercial development has spread

around the shores of the water body and public access has been choked off.

Chester said West Penn's proposal isn't good enough, but it's an improvement over what the utility proposed just one year ago — a "rudimentary" plan for a park at West Penn Beach.

"I think there is still room for improvement, but I certainly don't expect them to foot the entire bill for a tremendous recreation area," Chester said. "But I expect them to want to participate in such, which would include other parts of their property."

Personnel twist