

SPEAKER 1: Well, the purpose of the public hearings is to allow the public to have an input into power plant siting criteria. Now the criteria concerned with at this time was developed.

SPEAKER 2: The hearings held first in Brainerd then Saint Paul and finally last night in Mankato were designed to allow the public to respond to criteria developed by a state interdepartmental workgroup. Work to establish guidelines for the location of power plants is receiving top priority now because the northern states power company has announced that in order to meet the demand for more electricity, construction of a large scale coal burning plant must be started soon.

This time, however, NSP has asked the state to recommend one of seven proposed sites. In an interview this morning, Hines talked about some of the proposed criteria.

SPEAKER 1: And several that have probably caused more discussion than others are power plant siting criteria number 2, which has air quality impact. And the measure there is a pollutant dose per capita times the population receiving this dose.

And a preference is to minimize the product of this. This criteria, of course, has an implication, which says we would put a power plant where there are less people. We have other criteria, number 19 and number 20, which talk about proximity to the major demand center with a preference as close as possible.

It reduces the transmission line length because where your major demand center is where the electricity is going to be used to the possibility of utilizing byproducts from the power plan. And in particular, waste heat is more apt to occur where a major demand center is, which means there are more people, more industry, more possibilities of using this waste heat.

The other criteria, which is also related in this sense is the proximity to areas already environmentally impacted. I think the work group's idea here was that a major impact would be considered as a large industrial area or commercial area, where there already has been changes made in the landscape and the land use, and in the environment in general.

SPEAKER 2: Where the damage has already been done, in other words.

SPEAKER 1: Well, not necessarily-- well, damage in one sense, Yes. The fact that we have already altered the natural setting. And that doesn't mean it has to be what we would classify as polluted. But simply that you have already changed it. I mean, a commercial building sitting in a nice area. Certainly, by the fact that you've put that there, you've changed the scenic nature of the area. You have people coming and going. It doesn't mean necessarily mean that there's a lot of pollution there.

SPEAKER 2: The Environmental Quality Council was created by an executive order of the governor, and has no real authority to site power plants, and neither does any other state agency. As long as it meets the pollution standards of the pollution control agency, northern states power can itself decide where it will build. I asked what real purpose the final criteria will serve.

SPEAKER 1: Well, I think the Environmental Quality Council will take the criterias developed by the work group, the input from the public from these meetings, and the input from their citizens task force on power plant siting, an attempt to make a recommendation to the legislature in some form that these begin to be embodied in a manner that the state has more input into the site before it is chosen. Right now, as you mentioned, we have very little to do with saying which site would be best.

SPEAKER 2: It may be some time before any legislation to regulate power plant siting is enacted. But for now, NSP has indicated a willingness to review any recommendations before it decides where it will build its new plant. Copies of the proposed criteria are available from the Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Square Building St. Paul 55101, and written suggestions will be accepted until November 8. This is Greg Barron.