

Montague Nuclear Power Station Environmental Report

1975

1 carton (1 linear foot)

Call no.: MS 061

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Planning for construction of a nuclear power plant in Montague, Mass., in 1973, Northeast Utilities was required to conduct an environmental impact survey of the site, building a 500-foot tall weather monitoring tower to gather data. Their plans, however, were thwarted by the rise of a powerful antinuclear opposition, symbolized by a renowned act of civil disobedience in February 1974. On Washington's Birthday, a member of the Montague Farm commune, Sam Lovejoy, took down the tower using simple farm tools, turning himself in to the police immediately afterward. The ensuing trial, the effective organizing by his colleagues, and the success of their effort to prevent construction of the power plant is often regarded as a formative moment in the history of the modern antinuclear movement.

This environmental report for the proposed Montague Nuclear Power Station includes an accounting of the purpose of the facility, its environmental, archaeological, and social impact, and an analysis of the costs and benefits of operation.

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Background on Montague Nuclear Power Station

When Northeast Utilities (NU) proposed siting a nuclear power station in rural Montague, Mass., in 1973, they inadvertently ignited the modern antinuclear movement. Planned at point of rapid expansion in the nuclear energy industry, the plant would have featured two 1150 MWe General Electric boiling reactors and the company's investment of over one and a half billion dollars dwarfed the local economy. In accordance with federal regulations, NU began an environmental impact survey of the region late in the year, erecting up a 500-foot tall weather monitoring tower on Montague Plains to capture data on wind speeds and directions.

As NU moved forward with their plans, local opposition to the plant grew, led by a group calling themselves Nuclear Objectors for a Pure Environment (NOPE). Comprised of a diverse set of local veterans of radical causes, many based on the Montague Farm commune, NOPE called for an unqualified prohibition on nuclear energy and worked to educate the public to raise awareness and support for their cause. On Washington's Birthday, 1974, a member of NOPE, Sam Lovejoy, committed himself to an act of civil disobedience, using a set of simple tools to topple the weather monitoring tower and turning himself in to the police immediately thereafter. Charged with malicious destruction, he was tried in September 1974, by acquitted on a technicality. His act, however, galvanized opponents of nuclear power and helped to catalyze the formation of formidable groups like the Clamshell Alliance. In the wake of Montague and the formation of dozens of grassroots organizations, plans for the construction of 63 new nuclear power plants were scrapped between 1975 and 1980.

Scope of collection

This environmental report for the proposed site of the Montague Nuclear Power Station includes an accounting of the purpose of the facility, its environmental, archaeological, and social impact, and an analysis of the costs and benefits of operation.

Purpose of proposed facility

The site

The plant

Environmental effects of site preparation, plant, and transmission

Environmental effects of plant operation

Effluent and environmental measurements and monitoring programs

Environmental effects of accidents

Economic and social effects of the plant

Alternative energy sources and sites

Plant design alternatives

Summary benefit-cost analysis

Environmental approvals and consultations

Archaeological and historical impact statement, parts 1 and 2

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Michael Brown, May 2015.

Bibliography

For more on resistance to the Montague plant, see:

Blake Slonecker, *A New Dawn for the New Left*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2012

Robert Surbrug, *Beyond Vietnam*. UMass Press, 2009.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, July 2015.

Language:

English

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Cite as: Montague Nuclear Power Station Environmental Report (MS 061). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

Antinuclear movement--Massachusetts

Lovejoy, Sam

Montague (Mass.)--History

Northeast Utilities

Nuclear power plants--Massachusetts

Contributors

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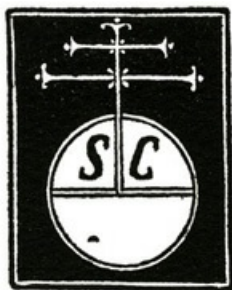
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