

# Tidal power dams feared threat to coastal Maine

PORTLAND, Me. (AP) — Two tidal-power dams being planned in Nova Scotia could increase the range of tides on the Maine coast by as much as 50 centimetres, threatening homes and roads and damaging the coastal ecology, Maine scientists are quoted as saying.

Peter Larsen, one of the scientists at the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Boothbay Harbor, says almost no one in a position of authority is doing anything about

the possible devastation of parts of the coast, the Maine Sunday Telegram reports.

The two dams would block off the northern end of the Bay of Fundy, using the power of the tides to generate a total of 6,000 megawatts of electricity. This is about equal to eight nuclear power plants the size of Maine Yankee at Wiscasset, Me., the newspaper's story says.

Larsen and Jerry Topinka, also of the Bigelow facility, believe the

dams would shorten the length of the Gulf of Maine from the Bay of Fundy to Cape Cod, Mass., and raise the water, thus increasing tides south of Saint John, N.B., the paper says.

One of the proposed dams, which would block off Shepody Bay between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, would raise Portland's tidal range by 7.5 centimetres, the scientists are quoted as saying. The other, which would enclose part of

the Minas Basin in Nova Scotia, would raise the tide 27.5 to 45 centimetres in Portland. Portland tides now rise and fall about three metres each day.

Preliminary feasibility studies have been completed by Nova Scotia, which hopes to have engineering plans finished in four years.

In the story, Topinka says the dams could disturb the fragile coastal ecology systems, while homes would be washed away,

some roads and salt marshes permanently flooded and new marshes created. Shellfish production would be disrupted, beach erosion would be hastened and navigational problems could arise, Larsen says.

But Larsen also says faster tidal currents would force nutrients to the surface of the water and improve fish catches.

More than 10 years ago, David Greenberg of the Redford Institute in Dartmouth, N.S., came up with

calculations showing that the dams could damage the coast of Maine. But that was before any serious plans were made to harness Bay of Fundy tides.

Larsen says the Maine Planning Office last fall said it would apply for a research grant from the New England River Basins Commission to look into the problem, but the agency would have no money under President Reagan's budget.