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Great Rivers Environmental Law Center to sue over Taum Sauk

The Board of Directors of Great Rivers Environmental Law Center last night authorized the filing of a lawsuit against the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) over AmerenUE's request to rebuild the upper reservoir of the Taum Sauk pumped storage project located on the East Fork Black River, in Reynolds County, Missouri. The suit is to be filed on behalf of Missouri Parks Association.

The Taum Sauk plant is an industrial facility in the midst of what is widely considered the most important scenic and natural landscape in the state, protected in more than 20,000 acres of contiguous state parks and conservation areas. Taum Sauk Creek, into which the overflow from the upper reservoir would discharge, is one of the least disturbed natural streams in the Ozarks, designated a State Outstanding Resource Water from its source until it enters Ameren lands.

The catastrophic collapse of Ameren's Taum Sauk reservoir was one of the most significant failures of a federally regulated dam in the history of the U.S.

"FERC says that its approval to rebuild the Taum Sauk's upper reservoir will have no impact on its decision of whether to renew Ameren's license to operate the facility. Once FERC allows Ameren to spend millions and millions of dollars to rebuild Taum Sauk, it will be virtually impossible for FERC to refuse a request to relicense the facility, no matter how compelling the case for that refusal may be," said Bruce Morrison, a Great Rivers' attorney.

Great Rivers Environmental Law Center recently won a suit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The suit against FERC is based on an identical claim - that the federal agency did not comply with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Great Rivers is a nonprofit public interest environmental law firm in St. Louis that provides free legal services to those working to promote preservation of open space, clean energy, clean air and clean water. Its web address is: www.greatriverslaw.org.