

Dam EIA due soon

By Angel Novelo

Reporter Staff Writer

The result of a feasibility test and an environmental impact assessment on the proposed Chalillo dam in the Cayo District, is expected to be completed as early as this month.

Public Relations Officer for the proposed dam, Norris Hall, said that the Belize government will give the go-ahead for the dam's construction depending on the findings of the studies.

Hall said that he is optimistic that the Chalillo dam will be found economically feasible and that building the dam will better prepare the country to meet the growing demand for electricity.

"The analysis so far has clearly indicated that rates will be going down," he said. "It's too early to say when the rates will go down. This will depend on the final report. No decision has been made, and will not be made, until the final report is completed."

Hall said that it is still too early to say where the money to build the dam, an estimated US\$24 million, will be coming from, but he pointed out that foreign investors have expressed interest.

Regarding the ongoing controversy over the dam's environmental impact, Hall said critics of the dam are faulting it for its negative impact, but they are failing to ad-

dress real environmental problems that exist in the area.

He alleges that over the past two years, "authorities" have detected that the water quality of the Macal River has been decreasing and that agricultural waste and military operations in the area are already posing serious problems for the environment and residents along the Macal River.

Hall also said that he has confirmed with authorities that the Macal River has been contaminated with chemical and human waste. He said that villagers have also expressed concerns, especially with tourism development focus in the area.

Reporter contacted the Public Health Department which said it had no knowledge of any major problems with the Macal River.

A spokesperson from the Public Health Bureau said that there have been instances where the water has been found to contain human waste, but that amount is minimal.

He said that his office is also not aware of any reports of the Macal River being contaminated with chemicals.

Ismael Fabro from the Department of the Environment said that once the result of the EIA is presented to his office, they will have up to two months to evaluate and determine whether to accept or reject the assessment.