

Clean and Reliable Hydro Power

# RECREATION ASSOCIATED WITH SMUD'S UARP

## Overview



In a normal water year, the Upper American River Project (UARP) generates an average of 1.8 billion kilowatt-hours of clean, reliable and economical hydro electricity to the 1.2 million residents of the SMUD service territory, while simultaneously providing a variety of abundant recreational opportunities for Northern California residents.

The seasonal water storage capability of the UARP reservoirs and the project's operational flexibility not only enable SMUD to generate electricity during the summer and other months when demand and/or wholesale market prices are at their highest levels, but it also enhances recreational opportunities. In particular, the UARP has contributed to two regionally significant recreational resources: the Crystal Basin Recreation Area, and whitewater boating on the South Fork American River below Chili Bar Dam.



## Crystal Basin Recreation Area

The Eldorado National Forest Crystal Basin Recreation Area spans 85,000 acres of pine and fir forests along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. Capped by the majestic, granite peaks of the Crystal Range and traversed by lakes, reservoirs and streams,



**SMUD**

SACRAMENTO MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT

The Power To Do More.<sup>SM</sup>

# The Crystal Basin – a diverse spectrum of rugged outdoor adventure



the Crystal Basin's four seasons and varied terrain offer a diverse range of outdoor adventure.

The three UARP storage reservoirs – Union Valley, Ice House and Loon Lake – and their associated recreation facilities serve as a focal point for the recreation area. These recreation facilities help meet the regional public demand for high quality outdoor experiences and have been planned and located in a manner to protect the long-term integrity of the forest's natural resources.

Facilities include more than 700 campsites (including group, boat or hike-in, and equestrian), fishing piers, paved bicycle trails, sanitation stations for recreational vehicles, a cross-country ski chalet, and two information stations. As part of a cooperative venture with the Forest Service, SMUD built most of these

facilities and contributes funds annually to the Forest Service for facility operation and maintenance.

In addition to the cooperative venture between SMUD and the Forest Service, other agencies and community-based organizations have made significant contributions.

- The California Department of Fish and Game annually stocks lakes, reservoirs and streams with trout.

- The Eldorado National Forest Interpretive Association helps provide the public with information about the recreational opportunities and the area's natural and cultural resources.
- The El Dorado County Sheriff's Department works closely with the Forest Service on providing public safety and search & rescue operations.
- The 50-member, all-volunteer Eldorado Nordic Ski Patrol helps the Forest Service maintain and patrol ski trails and assists in public education and safety.
- The California Department of Boating and Waterways recently provided funding for boat

launch facility improvements at the major UARP reservoirs, including floating piers to improve launching at various reservoir levels.

- The 160-member, all-volunteer El Dorado County Search & Rescue assists the Sheriff's Department with high-country search and rescue.

The cooperative stewardship of the Crystal Basin Recreation Area has become a national showcase of inter-governmental cooperative efforts and partnerships between agencies and local, volunteer-based nonprofit organizations. For its role, SMUD received the National Hydropower Association's 2000 Hydro Achievement Award for Recreational Stewardship, marking the first time the nonprofit association has honored a hydro project for enhanced public recreation benefits.

## Whitewater Boating on the South Fork

A second regionally significant recreational resource is related to the UARP – whitewater boating on the 21-mile-long segment of the South Fork American River from Chili Bar Dam to the upper end of Folsom Lake. Chili Bar Dam is part of the Chili Bar Hydroelectric Project, which is owned and operated



Motorized recreation is a popular activity within the Crystal Basin.

by PG&E and is located directly downstream of the UARP's lowermost and largest powerhouse, White Rock Powerhouse.

About 125,000 people raft or kayak the South Fork American River annually, with most use occurring on weekends between April and September. With commercial rafting representing about two-thirds of the total use, the South Fork ranks in the top ten most boated rivers in the United States in terms of commercial use.

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This segment of river is attractive for commercial rafting because it's easily accessible from major population centers and the level of difficulty is moderate. PG&E's daily regulation of the South Fork flows and SMUD's seasonal regulation of the flow regime contribute to the popularity of the South Fork as a whitewater opportunity.

By capturing a portion of the spring runoff and releasing it during the typically low flow summer months, the UARP provides a semi-predictable, higher-than-natural flow during the peak boating season. In recognition of this regionally-significant recreation resource, SMUD has historically coordinated with PG&E in the daily operation of White Rock and Chili Bar powerhouses. To the extent consistent with the power generation needs, SMUD is committed to operate the UARP in a manner that enhances summertime whitewater rafting.



***For additional information, please contact:***

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