



UPPER AMERICAN RIVER PROJECT

The Sierra Stairway of Power

Description:

The Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) owns and operates a hydropower system in the Sierra Nevada that consists of 11 reservoirs, eight powerhouses and transmission lines. Known as the Upper American River Project (UARP), the system uses the force of falling water to spin turbines that generate electricity.

Location:

UARP facilities are located in El Dorado and Sacramento counties, based primarily on federal lands in the Eldorado National Forest.

Facilities:

The system begins at Rubicon Reservoir (elev. 6,545 ft.) in the Rubicon River drainage and drops one mile in elevation along a 53-mile stair-step course ending at White Rock Powerhouse (elev. 993 ft.) on the South Fork of the American River, near the town of Coloma. Capturing rain and snowmelt runoff, the three largest reservoirs (Union Valley, Loon Lake and Ice House) store approximately 400,000 acre-feet of water. The stored water is used to generate power as it is released through each powerhouse and recaptured at the next downstream reservoir.

Power Generation:

In a normal water year the UARP generates approximately 1.8 billion kilowatt-hours of clean and reliable hydro electricity, or about 20 percent of the electricity needs of SMUD customers. With an immediate generating capacity of 688 megawatts, the system is capable of making significant contributions to the statewide electricity grid to meet California's needs at peak times of power usage.

Benefits:

The UARP consistently provides dependable, reliable and economically priced power in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. It also provides operating reserves for emergency power situations in California and the western states. However, the value of the UARP extends beyond the production of electricity. In partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, SMUD has provided significant recreational opportunities in El Dorado County by constructing campsites, fishing piers, bicycle trails, sanitation stations for recreational vehicles, a cross-country ski chalet and information stations throughout what is known as the Crystal Basin Recreation Area. Whitewater boating on the South Fork of the American River below Chili Bar Dam is another recreational resource related to the UARP.

Relicensing Process:

The UARP operates under a license granted to SMUD by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The current license, granted in 1957, will expire in 2007. SMUD initiated the process of applying for a new license in the spring of 2001. The relicensing process includes a thorough evaluation of all aspects of the hydroelectric project. During the multi-year process, SMUD, state and federal agency representatives, other interested parties and FERC participate in a review of engineering and environmental issues related to the project. SMUD is following the FERC alternative licensing process (ALP). This method encourages broad public participation.

Public Involvement:

SMUD encourages all interested parties to participate in the public process, and will host a series of public meetings throughout the relicensing proceeding. For a schedule of meetings, visit www.smud.org/relicensing.

More information:

SMUD Hydro Relicensing Project
P.O. Box 15830, M.S. A352, Sacramento, CA 95852-1830
PH: (916) 732-5838 e-mail: hydrorelicensing@smud.org

