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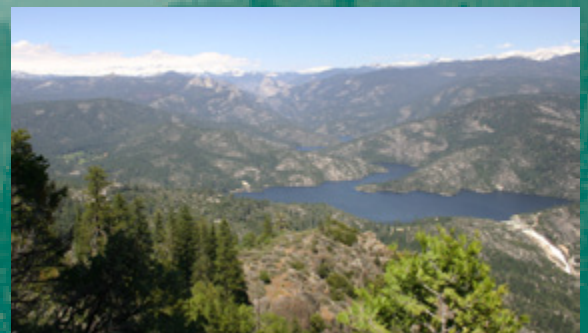
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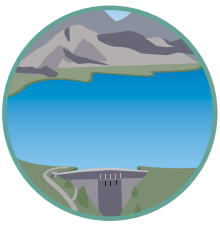
Big Creek Spring/Summer 2010 Newsletter



“They Call It Big Creek” (John Eastwood)

NEW! Beginning with this issue of the Big Creek Newsletter, news and information will be provided for the full Big Creek System and will include relicensing and implementation updates for the four ALP projects, as well as Portal, Vermilion, and Big Creek 4 projects.





Operations Update

Winter and Wild Spring Weather Produce Water Year Exceeding 113% of Normal!

THE 2010 water year (October 1, 2009 - September 30, 2010) for the computed natural flow of the San Joaquin River at Friant Dam is approximately 2,061,000 acre-feet, or approximately 113% of normal. The above normal runoff has resulted in spills at some project dams and high flows in project area streams.

In February, runoff forecasts were predicted to be near average or slightly above average levels while in March snow accumulations were slightly disappointing. However, April snow accumulations more than made up the difference. As a result the 2010 water year was computed to be 113% of normal. Southern California Edison's (SCE's) total project storage capacity is 560,234 acre-feet. This year's minimum project storage of 214,000

AF (38% of capacity) fell in April 2010. This year's maximum projected storage of 552,900 AF (98% of capacity) is estimated for August 2010. Storage by reservoir is listed to the left:

Reservoir	Capacity (acre feet)	Estimated 2010 Minimum Storage		Estimated 2010 Maximum Storage	
		Storage (acre feet)	% of Capacity	Storage (acre feet)	% of Capacity
Lake Edison	125,035	34,300	27%	119,300	96%
Florence Lake	64,406	6,400	9%	64,400	100%
Huntington Lake	89,166	32,400	36%	88,400	99%
Shaver Lake	135,568	93,500	69%	135,300	99%
Mammoth Pool	119,940	24,000	20%	119,900	100%
Redinger Lake	26,119	23,400	90%	25,700	98%
TOTALS	560,234	214,000	42% Avg.	553,000	97% Avg.



Big Creek 4 License Implementation

Unsafe Flow Conditions, 2010 Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog Study Postponed

On September 30, 2009, The Big Creek 4 Project received FERC approval to begin implementing the Native Aquatic Species Management Plan (NASMP) and the Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) for Redinger Lake and the Horseshoe Bend Reach of the San Joaquin River. This entailed consulting with a stakeholder Technical Review Group (TRG) regarding early data collection and developing a proposal for base-line studies. The Adaptive Management Proposal (Initial Proposal) to conduct biological baseline studies in 2010 was approved, as required, by the State Water Board and the Forest Service on March 15, 2010 and filed with FERC in April 2010. This Initial Proposal addresses the monitoring of habitat and native aquatic species. Monitoring follows the methods and schedule contained in the final NASMP.

As 2010 evolved into an obvious spill year, plans were made to conduct "Spill Year" Amphibian surveys. For the survey related to the Foothill yellow-legged frog, finding a window of opportunity to conduct the first survey was challenging. Conditions had to be at the right temperature (12°C), the survey had to be conducted before the system started spilling and the flows had to be under a certain level for access and safety. As SCE monitored these factors, one three-day window of opportunity emerged. Agency experts approved the effort and field crews were mobilized, only to find a change in weather, and increased flows which limited access to the study sites and presented safety concerns. Spill flows are expected to continue into July. Therefore, due to safety concerns, the amphibian study had to be postponed until the next spill year opportunity. Who said biology isn't exciting and suspenseful?

New License Issuance As Unpredictable As the Weather

The forecast date for Big Creek license issuance remains uncertain. A little over a decade ago, as the Licenses for Big Creek’s hydroelectric projects began nearing their expiration dates, SCE recognized that to apply individually for each of the seven licenses would be inefficient and would ignore the interdependence between hydroelectric power, natural, recreation and cultural resources and interests in the Big Creek basin. With approval from FERC, SCE launched an ambitious, interest-based collaborative process with stakeholders to integrate licenses and develop a comprehensive “package” of protection and mitigation measures. Although three of the Big Creek projects (Vermilion, Portal and Big Creek 4) had already started down the individual paths of the Traditional Licensing Process, they were accounted for in the Alternative Licensing Process (ALP) with the remaining four Big Creek Project licenses. After lengthy negotiations, stakeholders and SCE signed a Settlement Agreement in 2007.

The vision for Big Creek relicensing has remained constant – developing an integrated watershed management approach for the Big Creek basin. However, in a collaborative and regulatory effort of this magnitude and complexity, predicting when new licenses would be issued has been anything but constant.

The latest information is that new Big Creek licenses should be issued by the end of 2010 (or the beginning of 2011). For now, all projects except Big Creek 4, which already received a license in December 2003, are operating on temporary, annual licenses.

FERC issued its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on March 9, 2009, concluding the regulatory agency’s National

Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis of the ALP Settlement Agreement, SCE’s Application for New License and the terms and conditions recommended for inclusion in the new license. Portal and Vermilion also are packaged or referenced into this FEIS. The last step in this process is underway with California’s State Water Resources Control Board conducting the additional analysis required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the preparation of the Clean Water Act 401 Water Quality certification needed for new licenses.

Relicensing is, however, as unpredictable as the weather in Big Creek this year – a new law, recently passed in California, revises CEQA and requires additional analysis related to the effect of a proposed action on green house gas emissions. SCE and the State Water Resources Control Board in this case, are some of the first to address and implement this new law and, the process is still being defined! Stay tuned.....



Programmatic Agreement to Implement HPMP is Signed, Settlement Still Rules

SCE has been informed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that the final signed Programmatic Agreement (PA) for the Big Creek Alternative Licensing Process (ALP) was filed with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation on March 18, 2010. The PA stipulates that SCE will implement the Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP) upon issuance of new FERC licenses in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). SCE and other interested parties have been invited by FERC to be concurring parties to the PA between FERC and the California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

In keeping with SCE's commitment to ongoing communication and collaboration with the Big Creek ALP stakeholders, SCE provided a notification to stakeholders to make sure they were aware of this FERC action and that SCE has recently signed the PA as a consulting party.

On September 23, 2008 FERC issued, for review and comment, a draft PA and the associated draft HPMP developed during the Big Creek ALP collaborative process. FERC did not receive any comments on the draft PA or draft HPMP. As a result, FERC determined that the draft HPMP was considered final and issued the

final PA on October 28, 2009 for signature. FERC states in the PA that implementation of the measures in the final HPMP would enable SCE to comply with their cultural resource responsibilities under Section 106 of the NHPA, as amended. FERC indicates that Frank Winchell, FERC Archeologist should be contacted with any questions regarding the final PA at (202) 502-6104.

We look forward to our continued collaborative work with Big Creek ALP stakeholders as we prepare for the issuance of new licenses and subsequent implementation of the HPMP.

Once the Big Creek Licenses are issued SCE will work with a Heritage Advisory Council on implementing the HPMP. In addition, SCE looks forward to establishing a Native American Advisory Group, providing facilitation services and implementing the agreements described in the Non-FERC Settlement Agreement.



Q&A with Wayne Allen, Big Creek Relicensing Manager

Getting a Jump on License Issuance and Implementation

Q: Wayne, you have not yet received your new licenses. How confident are you that the proposed terms and conditions in the FEIS will be those contained in the License Orders?

A: I am very confident because most of the terms and conditions in the FEIS were negotiated with stakeholders and approved in the Big Creek Settlement Agreement. This Settlement Agreement was the foundation for the terms and conditions reflected in the FEIS – I don't see that there will be notable changes when the License Orders are issued. My concern is not so much with how FERC may alter terms and conditions, as it is when they issue the license. I also want to point out that the Settlement Agreement contained a number of Non FERC-agreements with stakeholders that are not in the FERC's jurisdiction but are fully binding. Once we receive our licenses, we can begin implementing these agreements as well.



Q: Given this inevitability, are there things you are doing to get a jump on License and Settlement Agreement implementation?

A: I sure hope it's inevitable because we are very busy preparing for rapid implementation when the day finally comes.

Q: What are some examples?

A: A Few examples are:

- Developing a number of tracking and organizational tools to manage implementation and compliance.
- Advanced planning for the infrastructure modifications that will be required to meet new instream flow requirements.
- Working with the Sierra National Forest on design and planning for the rehabilitation of campgrounds identified in the Recreation Plan.

We will be prepared when the Licenses are finally issued.