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Ashton dam reconstruction enters final year

ASHTON, Idaho, April 30, 2012—Work to repair and improve the nearly 100-year-old Ashton dam is entering its third and final year. The extensive project will bring the dam to modern construction standards and correct internal erosion caused by the dam's age.

PacifiCorp, which operates as Rocky Mountain Power in Idaho, worked with federal and state officials and interested stakeholders for a number of years on this project. Planning was closely coordinated with environmental, federal, state regulatory and permitting agencies who have authority over hydroelectric projects. Extensive consultation and planning for the safety of workers and the public—as well as water quality and fishery considerations—have been a priority in this process.

The project featured extensive preparatory steps beginning in 2010, including the construction of a diversion tunnel around the dam and the construction of an upstream cofferdam, which were required to allow the repairs to the dam itself. In January 2012 replacement and repair of concrete supporting structures began on the downstream side of the power house, and is nearing completion.

“During the course of the project, the reservoir levels have been adjusted up or down to allow work to be done and to allow some reservoir water to be available for irrigation users,” said Robert Atwood, project manager, PacifiCorp Energy. “The final deep reservoir drawdown of about 20 vertical feet has been scheduled to commence in early May and will be completed before the end of the month.”

This phase of the project will make use of the new diversion tunnel constructed in 2010 for bypassing the river around the dam. Immediately following the reservoir drawdown, much of the dam will be excavated and reconstructed. This final phase of the project will occur between June and November of 2012. During this final phase, the work area around the dam, as well as the reservoir, will remain closed to recreational use for safety reasons.

“We appreciate the ongoing project support, patience and understanding we have received from our neighbors and the Ashton community as reservoir levels have fluctuated and construction activities have had an impact on irrigation and recreation,” Atwood said. “Likewise, we're grateful to the Henry's Fork Foundation for the input and support they have provided as they have reviewed the details of this project. We look forward to completing this important project and returning the reservoir to a consistent full elevation and to maintaining the Ashton Hydroelectric Project to benefit electric customers and the community for many years to come.”

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Ashton dam project, third phase 2-2-2

Throughout the entire process, PacifiCorp worked with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Idaho Department of Water Resources' dam safety program to evaluate the structural conditions of the dam and to determine the most appropriate and cost effective design and construction method to upgrade the structure to modern standards. The company has consulted with qualified independent experts with extensive geotechnical and structural engineering experience to develop the design details and construction requirements and has enlisted similarly qualified contractors to perform the work.

About Ashton hydroelectric plant

The Ashton Hydro Plant is operated by PacifiCorp Energy, which provides electric generation services to Rocky Mountain Power and Pacific Power. The Ashton Plant is located on the Henry's Fork of the Snake River, approximately 2.5 miles west of Ashton, Idaho. The project began operating in 1914 and was later purchased and expanded in 1925 by Utah Power & Light Co. (a predecessor company of Rocky Mountain Power). The project consists of a dam and powerhouse with three generating units. The dam is a rock and earth filled structure, 60 feet tall and 226 feet long, with a 70-foot-wide concrete intake and 82-foot-long spillway. A roller compacted concrete cap was installed in 1991 to protect the embankment during flood flows. Unit No.1 is rated at 2.85 megawatts. Units No.2 and No. 3 are each rated at 2.5 megawatts.

Marking 100 years of customer service

2012 is an exciting year for Rocky Mountain Power employees as we mark the company's centennial. Our history of providing electric service has helped shape the development of communities across Idaho, Utah and Wyoming, and is woven into the history of the region and the people who live here.

In 1912, dozens of small, less-efficient electric companies, including Idaho Power & Transportation Co. and Telluride Power Co., were consolidated into Utah Power & Light Co. Telluride Power pioneered long-distance transmission with the construction of 200 miles of transmission lines extending from its development on Bear River at Grace, Idaho, to Eureka, Utah.

Utah Power continued to develop the Bear River system into one of the first multipurpose reclamation projects in America with immense value as a power source and an aid to agriculture in the area. The river and Bear Lake were connected by a canal that permitted the lake to store the valuable spring runoff water. A pumping plant was built to lift the water from the lake into a man-made canal to return the stored water to the river for use downstream as the irrigators required it. Four reservoirs and five power plants, now totaling 105 megawatts of capacity, were built at no cost to the farmers or to the federal government. The projects continue to provide benefits to farmers and electric consumers, as well as recreational use and wildlife habitat.

To learn more, visit, [our Centennial website.](#)