Project Overview

The Borel Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 382) is owned and operated by Southern California Edison (SCE) and is located on the Kern River in Kern County, California, and occupies approximately 189 acres of federal land, including 159 acres within the Sequoia National Forest and 30 acres administered by the Bureau of Land Management. FERC's predecessor agency, the Federal Power Commission, issued an original license for the Borel Project in 1925.

Lake Isabella and the Auxiliary Dam are operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and are not part of Project No. 382. The Project diversion and river intake are located on private lands. The canal intake is located on public lands under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service. The Project's primary facilities include: 1) small diversion dam on the Kern River; 2) an 11.2-mile-long Borel Canal; 3) a small afterbay; 4) a penstock; and 5) Borel Powerhouse and adjacent switchyard, that retuned water to the Kern River.

In 1950, SCE amended the project license to accommodate a flood control project undertaken by the Corps. The Corps project resulted in the construction of Isabella Dam, which includes a Main dam and an Auxiliary dam and impounds Lake Isabella, which has a surface area of 11,200 acres and a storage capacity of 570,000 acre-feet. The Auxiliary dam was built over the top of the Borel Canal—the Borel Project's only source of water. However, SCE retained an easement for the Borel Canal so that it could continue operating the Borel Project after construction of the Auxiliary dam.

SCE's current license for the Project was issued on May 17, 2006. That same year, the Corps began a dam safety modification study to address seismic, hydrologic, and seepage issues at Isabella Dam. This study demonstrated that the Auxiliary dam does not meet current seismic stability standards and must be modified to ensure that potential seismic activity does not pose a safety threat to nearby communities. As a result, the Corps is undertaking a dam safety modification project that includes decommissioning and removing the portion of SCE's Borel Canal that runs under the Auxiliary dam thereby rendering the Borel Project inoperable.

Surrender Process

It is therefore SCE's intent to decommission the remainder of the Borel Hydroelectric Project that will achieve the following objectives:

- Surrender the FERC Hydropower License
- Remediate all potential public safety risks associated with project facilities.
- Remediate any environmental, cultural, tribal, historic and socio-economic impacts associated with the decommissioning of the project.
- Restore all project lands to a condition satisfactory to the respective private and public landowners.
- Relinquish all land easements and right of ways associated with project roads and facilities.
- Transfer ownership, maintenance and operation of any remaining project roads and facilities that are determined to be historically or culturally significant in the License Surrender Process, or which are deemed important to public safety

Because the Borel hydroelectric project operates under a FERC license, SCE must file an application with FERC to surrender the hydropower license before FERC will allow SCE to decommission the remainder of the Borel Canal, Powerhouse and associated project features. The intent of the License Surrender process will be to develop a License Surrender Application which will include:

- A proposed decommissioning plan that will detail the proposed removal and restoration of project features and project lands associated with the Borel hydropower project.
- Environmental Report that will assess the impacts the decommissioning activities will have on multiple environmental factors.
- Proposed Mitigation and Enhancement Measures to mitigate the identified decommissioning impacts.
- Proposed Post Decommissioning Monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the restoration work.

Following the development of the License Surrender Application and prior to filing the application with FERC, SCE will hold public meetings to allow project stakeholders and interested parties the opportunity to review and provide comments on the License Surrender Application and Proposed Decommissioning Plan.

After the License Surrender Application is filed, FERC will perform and Environmental Review of the Proposed Application. The State Water Resources Control Board will also perform an environmental review under the Clean Water Act as well as a CEQA Analysis and may issue additional conditions in a Water Quality Certification. Upon completion of the Federal and State Environmental Reviews, FERC will issue a License Surrender Order which will contain the specific scope of project facility removal and restoration, along with required mitigation and enhancement measures and post decommissioning monitoring requirements.

Upon receipt of a License Surrender Order from FERC, SCE will commence with the decommissioning of the Borel Hydroelectric Project in accordance with the conditions in the FERC License Surrender Order. FERC will issue a final decommissioning order to SCE only after SCE has satisfied all of the conditions and post decommissioning monitoring requirements in the License Surrender Order.

It is anticipated that the License Surrender Process will take anywhere from 2 to 5 years to receive a License Surrender Order from FERC.