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NEWS

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Southern California Edison Announces Major Advance in Efforts to Offset the Environmental Impact of Coastal Power Generation

Utility offers the successful environmental collaboration with regulators as a green standard for coastal power plants

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., Nov. 10, 2008 — Southern California Edison (SCE) today announced completion of the largest environmental project of its kind in the United States— a 175-acre artificial giant kelp reef off the coast here. With the placement of 120,000 tons of rock on the ocean floor, the project is expected to produce the nation’s first sustainable artificial kelp forest attracting many species of coastal fish and invertebrates dependent on such underwater habitats for shelter and food.

“This reef project is a blueprint for how regulators and utilities nationwide could successfully balance essential energy and environmental needs,” said Cecil House, SCE senior vice president of safety, operations support and chief procurement officer. “Just as our nearby San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station helps strengthen the power grid in Orange and San Diego counties, this collaborative project between the California Coastal Commission and the plant’s owners will protect and enhance the ocean environment.”

The two-mile kelp forest created by the new reef is expected to produce as much as 50 tons of fish annually, significantly enhancing Southern California’s coastal environment and recreation resources. The project will fully offset any impacts to a nearby natural kelp forest caused by naturally cloudy ocean water processed by the nuclear power plant. SCE is the operator and majority owner of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. Other owners include San Diego Gas & Electric and the City of Riverside.

“As concern grows about how to combat climate change, power plants such as San Onofre are becoming increasingly important to meeting the twin needs of energy sufficiency and environmental sustainability,” said Ross Ridenoure, SCE senior vice president and chief nuclear officer. “The San Onofre plant emits nothing into the atmosphere. And our extensive environmental projects ensure the ocean is protected as well.”

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A 15-year environmental impact study sponsored by SCE and led by an independent scientific committee established by the coastal commission analyzed the possible effects on marine life of the “once-through” ocean water cooling system used by the San Onofre plant. The research resulted in significant advances in the science of marine life impact analysis. It found the cooling system slightly reduced the regional fish population and might reduce somewhat the size of the nearby San Onofre kelp bed.

Water drawn into the plant from an area 3,200 feet offshore is naturally cloudier due to current and wave action than the area 6,000 to 8,500 feet offshore where the cooling water is later discharged. The study found that, as this cloudier water drifted south toward the San Onofre kelp bed, it would reduce sunlight and might impact the size of that kelp forest. Plant owners and the coastal commission developed the new reef project to offset this possibility.

SCE environmental engineers began with an experimental 23-acre reef northwest of the power plant to test the first-of-its kind design researchers had developed. Utility and commission scientists analyzed a new single-layer rock design as well as several types of material, evaluating how best to develop a sustainable giant kelp forest. The results formed the basis for SCE's construction plan that was endorsed last February by the coastal commission. Construction of the two-mile reef began in June and recently was completed.

The State Lands Commission approved a recommendation by SCE that the reef be named after the late Wheeler J. North, a noted California Institute of Technology marine biologist whose pioneering research in Pacific kelp contributed to the reef's design. A plaque and information honoring North, who died in 2002, has been permanently placed by the City of San Clemente on a pier overlooking the reef location.

Additional information about the reef and wetlands environmental projects of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station is available at www.sce.com/reef.

Remembering Wheeler J. North

Wheeler J. North, noted Caltech professor of environmental science, arrived at Caltech in 1962 as a visiting professor of biology after several years at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego. At Caltech, he also was an associate professor of environmental health engineering and a professor of environmental science. North pioneered many of the technologies used to study giant kelp forests and contributed much to the current scientific understanding of kelp biology. He was the author of numerous books on kelp science.

About Southern California Edison

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