

WHAT IS THE BOREL CANAL HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT?

When it was licensed in 1925, the 11.2 mile Borel Project was designed as a “Run of River” hydroelectric project which means the natural flow and elevation drop of a river are used to generate electricity. For Borel, water was taken from either the Kern River’s north fork or more recently, at the Lake Isabella Auxiliary Dam depending upon the water level of Lake Isabella. Water then travelled through the Borel Canal and into the Borel Powerhouse where 11 MW of power was steadily generated.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROJECT?

The Borel Hydroelectric Project is owned and operated by Southern California Edison (SCE).

WHY IS SCE SURRENDERING THEIR LICENSE?

In 2006, the Army Corps of Engineers began a dam safety modification study and determined that the dam didn’t meet earthquake safety standards. As a result, the Corps began a dam safety modification project. In 2017, the Corps implemented the seismic safety modifications to the Auxiliary Dam which resulted in the condemnation of SCE’s flowline conduit through the dam. The conduit through the dam was abandoned in place by filling it with concrete and rendering the Project nonfunctional.

WHAT IS A SURRENDER APPLICATION?

A Surrender Application is what SCE must file before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) will allow them to decommission the Borel Canal, Powerhouse and associated project features. FERC processes the Surrender Application to ensure that safety and environmental concerns are addressed.

WHAT’S INCLUDED IN A SURRENDER APPLICATION?

To surrender a License, SCE will need to prepare an application that includes the following information: The reason for surrendering the license, a copy of the license and all amendments associated with the project. The application must address issues such as public safety, environmental resources, tribal and cultural resources and document the stakeholder consultation process. At the heart of the application is the decommissioning plan. This plan will provide the approach for removing project facilities and land restoration activities.

WHAT IS FERC?

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is a federal agency that regulates the interstate transmission of natural gas, oil, electricity and hydropower projects. They are responsible for issuing hydropower project initial licensing, relicensing and decommissioning.

WHAT IS A LICENSE IN THIS SETTING?

Approval from Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to develop and operate a hydroelectric project for a specified period the of time.

WHO OWNS THE LAND IN THE PROJECT AREA?

Approximately 189 acres are owned by the federal government and 23 acres are privately held.

WHEN IS THE SURRENDER APPLICATION GOING TO BE SUBMITTED?

SCE is currently planning to submit the application in January 2023.

DOES THE PUBLIC GET TO SEE THE SURRENDER APPLICATION?

Yes. Over the next two years, SCE will host public meetings and there will be a public comment period during the summer of 2022. Once the Application is filed, FERC will provide a public comment period as well.

WHAT ARE THE PROJECT BENEFITS?

Addressing potential public safety risks associated with the project facilities

Remediating any environmental, cultural, tribal, historic and socio-economic impacts associated with the existing project

Restoring public and private project lands to a satisfactory condition

Removing land easements and right of ways associated with project roads and facilities

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FERC TO REVIEW THE APPLICATION?

There is no defined amount of time FERC takes to review applications. SCE is planning for the process to take between 2 to 5 years, but it could be longer. Once the review process is complete and FERC is satisfied with the contents within the application, they will provide their approval to begin the decommissioning process.

WHAT DOES SCE DO WHILE FERC REVIEWS THE SURRENDER APPLICATION?

SCE will continue to maintain the Borel Canal and associated facilities as they are now until such time as decommissioning activities, such as permitting, start.

WHEN WILL CONSTRUCTION BEGIN

We don't have an exact date at this time. We anticipate that construction along the canal could begin as early as 2027, but will likely be later.