

One Step Closer to Increased Hydro Power



View of one stream gauge measuring hydrology of Allison Creek.

Photo courtesy Hatch Acres

As you could guess, CVEA is excited about its newest hydropower project being designed for Allison Creek and we think our members should be excited too. This project will provide many benefits to CVEA members, including cheaper power, reduced emissions, reduced dependence on fossil fuel and improved reliability. With a project this good; you may be wondering when can we start generating electricity.

To answer that question, it's important to understand what is required to build a project of this magnitude. To begin, we have to know what impact the project will have on the environment and the local community. Will the project impact fish, birds, mammals or vegetation? Will the project disturb an archeological site or ancient burial ground? Do we have permission from the people that own the land under the project to build there? Will the project cause a hazardous situation for people and animals nearby in the event of a flood or avalanche? Does the project impact the Valdez Marine Terminal and Pipeline operations? Will the project bring an appropriate return on your investment?

Some of these questions are very difficult to answer and require years of study by highly specialized experts. Most importantly, all of these questions must be answered before we dig our first shovel of dirt. Since we began the project in 2008, CVEA has made steady progress in answering these questions.

We now have a thorough assessment on the impact of Allison Creek to the environment and to the community of Valdez. Despite this, our study of the project impact will continue, even after the project is complete.

It has taken a tremendous effort to get where we are today. We will use our fish studies, as an example, to illustrate that point. In 2008 we initiated a very intensive study of Allison Creek. We installed traps to investigate what types of fish were in the creek and where they were located. We took some of these fish and with the proper permission, analyzed them for quantities, size, health and origin. We studied the creek characteristics for wetted widths, depths, water temperature, water velocity and natural barriers to fish such as a waterfall. We even studied the organisms and microorganisms in the stream that might be feeding the fish. After three years of studying the stream, we developed a comprehensive fish impact report.

Our effort did not stop simply by writing a report. Next we started sharing our results with government fish experts at Fish and Game and Fish and Wildlife Services. Regular meetings were held to discuss results of our fish studies. We adapted certain aspects of the project to minimize the impact on fish and creek characteristics. The results of these meetings and discussions have now been summarized into a biological report. This report was included in our Draft Preliminary Environmental Assessment and is available to the public.

Similar studies have been accomplished on birds, mammals and plant life. In addition, we have studied the proposed site for cultural significance, archeological items, wetlands, scenic views, local recreation, water usage, economic impact, land use and hazards to people. The results to all these studies are included in our License Application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), submitted on August 29, 2011.

Now FERC will begin their analysis of our application. This analysis can take from two to five



years but given CVEA's thorough preparation prior to application submission, we are confident that FERC's analysis for Allison Creek will be smooth and swift.

To further shorten the time line, CVEA is currently developing our procurement methodology. Hiring a construction company for a project this size is no easy task. There are several different procurement techniques that can be used. It is CVEA's goal to determine the best procurement technique and have a contractor selected at the same time the license is issued by FERC. This will allow construction to begin right away.

After we receive our license from FERC, the project will take two to three years to build due to the short construction season in Alaska. Construction will have to stop when conditions on the site become unsafe from cold, snow or avalanche risk. With the time needed for FERC to review our license application and the time it will take for construction, CVEA believes we can begin generating electricity at Allison Creek in 2015. Keep in mind that this is a BEST case scenario. The good news is that we believe our best case scenario is an achievable goal.

For more information on the Allison Creek Hydroelectric Project, please contact John Duhamel, CVEA Executive Engineer/Project Manager, at (907) 822-3211. Reports on this project (P-13124) can be reviewed at FERC's eLibrary at www.ferc.gov. ■



Top, a harmless dye is added to the stream by a biologist to measure the water velocity. Above, one of many biologists used to study the stream and fish populations. Here, he checks fish traps to determine fish species.

Photos courtesy Hatch Acres