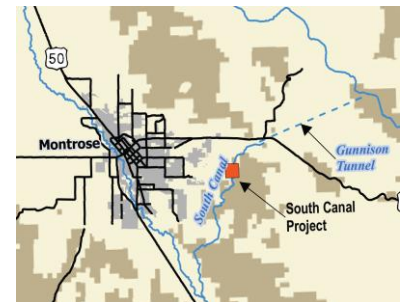


DMEA and Water Users Assn. Plan 6 MW Hydroelectric Plant

*Electric power potential recognized during the
Taft Administration expected to be developed soon.*

(Montrose, CO) The President's stimulus package will likely soon lead to a new renewable energy development on Colorado's Western Slope. The president spoken of, however, is not Barack Obama; it is William Howard Taft.

Delta-Montrose Electric Association (DMEA), together with the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association (UVWUA), recently filed for a federal lease of power privileges to use the "run of river" flow of water coming through the Gunnison Tunnel, dug more than 100 years ago, for approximately six megawatts (MW) of electric generating capacity. The proposed hydroelectric plant, announced September 26, 2009 at the Gunnison Tunnel's "Celebration of the Century" in Montrose, would be one of the largest renewable energy facilities in Western Colorado.



"Run of river" means that no dam will need to be constructed for the project. The water that will be used to generate power comes through the six-mile Gunnison Tunnel to a pre-existing diversion called the "South Canal," a primary channel of the irrigation network of 575 miles of canals and ditches which irrigates the farms and ranches of the Uncompahgre Valley. President Taft came to the area in 1909 to personally open the Gunnison Tunnel, the first project undertaken by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The Gunnison Tunnel enabled a semi-arid area in the southwest to be transformed into a thriving agricultural community.



Although irrigation for agriculture was the primary motivation behind the construction of the Gunnison Tunnel, the potential to generate electricity resulting from the project was noted by the media of the day. A reporter from the *New York Times* who covered President Taft's opening of the Gunnison Tunnel wrote on August 22, 1909:

"The water, after it leaves the tunnel, will have 372 feet fall, which can be used to generate electric power sufficient to light every town and every farmhouse in the Uncompahgre Valley and provide power for all kinds of commercial and industrial purposes."



Of course, demand for electricity in the area has grown tremendously since 1909, but the potential power from the “South Canal” project—about 6 megawatts (MW) of capacity—is still significant. DMEA’s overall system peak is roughly 110 MW, so the South Canal hydroelectric facility’s capacity would be about five percent of DMEA’s demand—much more than a drop in the bucket for a co-op DMEA’s size. Colorado’s Governor also noted the contribution the project could make to the state.

“I congratulate the Delta-Montrose Electric Association for its leadership in advancing our New Energy Economy,” said **Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter**.

“This project illustrates how renewable energy can repower Colorado’s rural economy, create jobs, diversify our energy supplies and improve our country’s energy security with clean, homegrown electricity.”

“This is yet another example of how Colorado is leading the nation in renewable energy production,” said **U.S. Senator Mark Udall**. “Not only will this hydroelectric plant be one of the largest renewable energy producers in our state, but it will create jobs that are very much needed in Western Colorado. I congratulate Delta-Montrose Electric Association and Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association for coming together to make this happen.”

U.S. Senator Michael Bennet likewise commended the collaboration that is moving the project forward.

“DMEA and the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association are showing us that we work best when we work together,” said Senator Bennet. “Their partnership is a perfect example of the kind of innovative thinking Colorado’s providing to meet the demands – energy and otherwise – of the 21st century.”

Congressman John T. Salazar, representing the congressional district in which the project would be built, is also highly supportive of the effort.

“As a strong proponent of renewable energy resources, I am pleased to support DMEA’s plan to produce energy from the flow of water coming through the Historic Gunnison Tunnel. At a time when rural electric cooperatives must budget and plan for sufficient electricity to meet the needs of the future, DMEA has ensured that a portion of their future power will be generated locally and delivered at a reasonable cost,” Congressman Salazar noted.

“Such efforts demonstrate the best in Western innovation and wise use of water resources. DMEA works to set the standard for developing the potentials of a clean energy economy, and continues to enhance its role and reputation as a leader among the region’s rural electrical cooperatives.”

DMEA’s wholesale power provider, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, also praises the project. **Tri-State executive vice-president and general manager Ken Anderson** explained, “Thirteen percent of Tri-State’s energy comes from renewable hydropower, and we’re diversifying our resource mix with large-scale wind power and solar energy. We’re excited to see DMEA and the Water Users Association build a reliable, predictable hydroelectric facility. Our policies fully support our member distribution systems developing projects of this magnitude.”

Construction of the plant would be in the future, with specific timing contingent on the federal government. **DMEA’s general manager Dan McClendon** is optimistic.

“If this project moves forward through the federal permitting process, and I am confident it will, DMEA’s membership will benefit in many ways. Money we would have otherwise exported out of our community for wholesale electricity will be retained in our own community,” McClendon explained. “Estimates of the cost of wholesale power this project would produce are favorable—even without any grants or other financial assistance that are possible to help us fund it. It would essentially lock in our cost of wholesale power for the percentage of power that the South Canal could generate for our system.”

And with “cap and trade” legislation pending, the South Canal project looks even more attractive for DMEA members, McClendon explained. Small hydro facilities wouldn’t be subject to carbon taxes or other ways of attaching a cost to carbon which could make electricity generated by fossil-fuels more expensive.

“The achievements of the past can help power a bright future for our community,” says **Marc Catlin of the UVWUA**. “Water from the Gunnison Tunnel made the development of our valley possible. Soon, clean, renewable hydroelectricity energy could make a substantial contribution to sustaining our economic development.”



DMEA’s general manager Dan McClendon makes announcement as (l-r) “President and Mrs. Taft,” Colo. state legislator Scott Tipton, Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association director Marc Catlin and “President Theodore Roosevelt” listen.



An estimated 700 DMEA member-owners were in the stands to hear the announcement during the “Celebration of the Century” of the 100 year anniversary of the Gunnison Tunnel.

