

# KR-3 receives some needed TLC

By George Stahl/ Special to the Sun | Posted: Wednesday, April 9, 2014 12:00 am

Since 1920, the power plant known as KR-3 just outside of Kernville has been operating on a daily basis, generating power for valley residents. “Kern River 3 is a rare example of a powerhouse designed with architectural beauty and sophistication for that time,” said SCE Manager, Toby Gibson of Weldon. The massive power station sits on the Kern River, below the Fairview dam and on an average generates 35 megawatts of electricity using water flowing thru its turbines from the Kern River.

For nearly 100 years, the plants’ 14 miles of concrete and steel tunnels, flumes and penstocks (huge pipes that carry water from the tunnels.) have carried millions of gallons of water to provide power for homes, businesses, street lighting and a high quality of living for the KRV. Over those years, the water has been digging away at the structures, causing their walls, floors and ceilings to erode and show signs of fatigue.

In August of 2013 approval was given to begin to repair the damage time has done to the concrete veins and arteries of the plant including the Fairview dam. “The dam’s location on the Kern required obtaining permits and approvals for the work from federal and state agencies,” Gibson said. “Because of its historical place along the river, SCE had to obtain approval from the California Historic Preservation Office as well,” he added. SCE has also been required to hire a consultant to do regular environmental inspections as the work progresses.

ACE Restoration & Waterproofing, Inc. of Fullerton, Calif. has been contracted for the work. “After the competitive bid process, ACE was chosen for the job,” said Cal Rossi, Region Manager with SCE. “Due to the specialized training and licensing required to work in the tunnels, ACE was a good choice,” Rossi said. The company has done work with SCE in the past and has a proven track record for quality and timely work.

A crew of 43 men, sectioned for specific tasks, and who are not claustrophobic are doing the work. The tunnels are only 8 foot tall, just under five feet wide and very, very dark when the lights go out. Of those 43, ACE has hired six workers from the valley to be a part of the crew. “Half of the crew are from Kern County. We were very pleased with being able to hire the six men locally. A good portion of the crew have been staying at the Falling Waters River Resort since we started in August and will be there until we are finished in December,” said ACE V.P. Ed Worden, who is supervising the project. According to Rossi, it has been estimated that on an economic level alone, the project will generate approximately \$50,000 in revenue for the KRV from the workers staying in the valley.

The renovation project of KR-3 and its numerous components has continued rain or shine. “We are about 8 miles into the 14 miles of tunnels, we have almost completed the dam resurfacing and we have been working on repairing the flumes,” said Worden. “The project is approximately 15-18 percent complete.” According to Gibson, ACE is right on schedule. “And because of their expertise with tunnel safety, there

have been no injuries on the project," Gibson said, as the four men looked around for a piece of wood to rap on.

Also on hand in the construction trailer was KR-3 Maintenance Supervisor, Dan Keverline of Lake Isabella. The renovation will include replacing the intake house, which houses the equipment to control operation of the water flow equipment that is among the many things Keverline and his crew are responsible for.

The work is expected to continue thru Dec. 2014. "Southern California Edison has a rich history, spanning nearly 100 years, in the Kern River Valley. The maintenance and repair work that SCE and contract crews are performing to the hydroelectric generation system will ensure that our partnership with the community will continue for generations to come," Rossi said.