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## Grand County hydroelectric project proposed once again

By Amy Joi O'Donoghue , Deseret News

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Looking from Dead Horse Point at the Colorado River and Canyonlands National Park. A hydroelectric power project has been proposed using river water east of this location. (Ravell Call, Deseret News)

MOAB — A California power company has resurrected its proposal for a pumped-storage hydroelectric project outside Moab that would draw water from the Colorado River.

Frank Mazzone, president of Sonoma-based Utah Independent Power Inc., said Friday the increasing amount of interest being directed at the development of solar and wind power generation in Utah signals it's a good time to explore hydropower — which can help shore up those other intermittent sources.

Mazzone has submitted a preliminary permit application for the 800-megawatt project to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which is accepting [public comment](#) on the proposal through May 22.

Brian Cesbark, a spokesman with FERC, said the proposal is in the very early stages, and after a review of the comments, the agency will decide if there is enough merit in the project for the utility company to do further investigation. Cesbark said if a preliminary permit is issued for the project, it does not authorize construction but acts as "placeholder" while more research is done.

Utah Independent Power had entertained putting in two hydroelectric projects using Colorado River water in 2008 at Bull Canyon and Long Canyon, but the proposals were put on hold given the uncertainty of the economy and questions about demand.

Mazzone's proposal now just focuses on Long Canyon and entails the construction of two dams to store water and generate power for storage. Initially, water from the river would be pumped into the lower reservoir.

At times when electricity is plentiful and low-priced, the project would consume energy to pump the water uphill to the second reservoir. During peak demand when the price of power is higher, the water would be released downhill through turbines into the other reservoir to generate power.

"The major benefits for these sources of energy comes by being able to store electricity in times of very low usage and then use it during times of high demand," Mazzone said. "Storing in times of plenty and using it in times of scarcity is not a new concept."

A coalition of environmental groups such as Moab-based Living Rivers have been adamantly opposed to the hydropower project because of its use of water from the Colorado River and the logistical impracticality of conveying power to faraway urban markets.

Living Rivers' John Weisheit also stressed that such a power project would compromise scenic red rock vistas and degrade recreational opportunities in one of Utah's most prime destination locations.

The Long Canyon pumped storage proposal is one of several hydroelectric projects under review by FERC in Utah. A proposed 700-megawatt at North Eden Creek in Rich County has been abandoned by Symbiotics, but the company's Parker Knoll project in Piute County was granted a final license application earlier this year.

Proposed to offer an installed capacity of 1,330 megawatts — enough to power 300,000 homes — Parker Knoll is also being developed in consultation with the Bureau of Land Management. The Hurricane Cliffs hydropower project, part of the proposed Lake Powell Pipeline, is in the study phase.

*E-mail: [amyjoi@desnews.com](mailto:amyjoi@desnews.com) Twitter: [amyjoi16](#)*

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