Pacific Hydro receives â€˜Environmental Initiative of the Yearâ€™ international award

â€¢â€˜Environmental Initiative of the Yearâ€™ Award recognises the innovative environmental initiatives implemented during the construction of Pacific Hydroâ€™s 111MW Chacayes run-of-river hydro power plant in Chile.

Leading renewable energy company Pacific Hydro received the ‘Environmental Initiative of the Year’ Award for its 111MW Chacayes run-of-river hydro power plant in Chile at the International Tunnelling Awards 2011, announced during a reception in Hong Kong last night.
Hosted by the UK’s New Civil Engineer and Ground Engineering magazines, the International Tunnelling Awards showcase and reward outstanding projects and achievements in the global tunnelling industry.
An investment of over US$450 million, the Chacayes run-of-river power plant was officially opened in October 2011. The plant is able to generate enough clean energy to supply more than 300,000 Chilean homes and its operations will abate over 340,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas pollution every year – the equivalent to taking more than 130,000 vehicles off the road.
“Our team is very proud to receive this accolade,” said Pacific Hydro CEO Rob Grant. “This award recognises the sustainable development measures we put in place in the early design stages of the project to comply not only with Chilean environmental regulation and our own Health, Safety and Sustainability policy, but also with the Equator Principles and the Kyoto Protocol Clean Development Mechanism eligibility requirements.”

The innovative environmental initiatives at the Chacayes project represented an investment of over US$10 million and included:- the utilisation of low height intakes, instead of large dams, in line with the Kyoto Protocol standards;-tunnelling works using a tunnel boring machine (TBM) to minimise environmental impacts;- continuous monitoring of the native fauna during the construction of the project and also during the operations phase;- implementation of a Community Management Plan to anticipate, avoid or mitigate social impacts and also to manage complaints in neighbouring rural and urban areas;-development of a nursery fully managed by community members for reforestation, which created training and employment opportunities and allowed the production of approximately 400,000 native plants and trees;- construction of a 66 kV power line which allowed the supply of electricity throughout the construction stage from another run-of-river hydro project to minimize the use of diesel generators;- construction of new access roads and widening of an existing bridge that improved access to the remote region where the project activity took place;- construction of a 2.6 kilometre tunnel instead of a free flow canal to connect the two intakes of the project to minimize the impact on a National Reserve, which added US$5 million to the cost of the project; and- painting of some of the transmission line towers to mitigate visual impacts.
In addition to its commitment to the environment, Pacific Hydro has created positive outcomes for the local communities.

“At the peak of its construction, the Chacayes project created approximately 2,000 direct and 3,000 indirect jobs,” explained Mr Grant. “We also developed an annual training program for the community and created an ongoing community fund called Creciendo Juntos to sponsor projects in education, health and the welfare of the local communities.”

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