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Completion of artificial reef announced

Monday, November 10, 2008

By San Diego Suburban Newspapers

Southern California Edison will formally announce today the completion of a 175-acre artificial giant kelp reef just north of San Diego County, which the utility calls the first environmental restoration project of its kind.

As the nation's largest artificial kelp reef, it is expected to serve as a model for similar projects, according to Edison executives. The project was designed to compensate for environmental damage caused by the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station.

Edison will be required to monitor the reef's condition and conduct studies comparing its productivity with that of nearby kelp forests for about four decades.

The cost of construction and monitoring could approach \$40 million and will be borne by Edison and other owners of nuclear plants, including San Diego Gas & Electric Co., according to The San Diego Union-Tribune.

In addition to its habitat value, the reef may be alluring to local divers.

"Diving in a giant kelp gives you the same feeling as walking through a redwood forest. It's a special place," Ed Parnell, a marine ecologist at UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, told the newspaper in June, when construction on the reef began.

Besides building the reef, Edison committed to restoring 150 acres of wetlands at the San Dieguito Lagoon near the Del Mar Fairgrounds, the newspaper reported. The company hired Coastal Environments, a marine engineering firm in La Jolla, to oversee both projects.

The announcement that the reef has been completed was scheduled to be made by San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station Chief Executive Ross Ridenoure, who is Edison's chief nuclear officer, Edison Senior Vice President for Environmental Projects Cecil House, and California Coastal Commission Executive Director Peter Douglas at the San Clemente Pier at 10 a.m.

