



Approval of the Sauveterre hydropower plant (FR)

Decision and background information

By the EKOenergy Secretariat, July 2016

Background

EKOenergy sales are increasing gradually, and in the last months, there have been a couple of concrete demands for EKOenergy from France.

In France, subsidised electricity cannot be marketed (the Guarantees of Origin of these power plants are not on the market) and recently the rules have even got more restrictive. That means that in practice there is almost no French wind or solar on the market. Also many Guarantees of Origin remain in the hands of the largest French seller (former monopolist) and are therefore not available for newer players on the market.

In the end of 2015 we approved a first French hydropower plant. Ever since, we have been looking for a second power plant.

Description of the power plant

The Hydropower plant of Sauveterre is located on the Rhône at Sauveterre in the department of the Gard, (Languedoc-Roussillon-Midi-Pyrénées's region), 13km north from Avignon.

The power plant is owned by the company CNR (Companie Nationale du Rhône) which owns over 30 hydropower plants on the Rhône river. The Sauveterre power plants has been built in 1973 and its annual mean energy production is 286 GWh with an installed Capacity of 52MW. The production comes from 2 Kaplan turbine of 26 MW.

Environment of the power plant

In the river basin of Rhône-Méditerranée, we can find 50 of the 72 freshwater fish species present in France (among them 2 are endemics).

Several species are endangered, their living environment is affected by the degradation of the quality of the water and by changes to the morphology of water course and the water regime.

The migratory species present in the basin are the allis shad, the *Alosa agone*, the eel, the sea lamprey and the European river lamprey.

The half of the rivers of the basin and 88% of the groundwaters are considered as a good ecological state. At Sauveterre, the ecological state of the Rhône is considered as “medium” in the Water Framework Directive (see “L’état des eaux bassins Rhône-Méditerranée et Corse” http://www.eaurmc.fr/espace-dinformation/brochures-dinformation/qualite-des-eaux.html?eID=dam_frontend_push&docID=3837).

Fish passes of the power plant

A new fish passage is under construction and should be operational around mid-may 2016. The fish passage will consist of a forty successive basins allowing fish to climb the 10m high dam. The debit of the fish pass should be about 2m²/s.

This fish passage is one of the key components of the Rhone's river basin management plan and of the plans to drastically improve the conditions for migratory species in the Rhone. See also: PLan de GEstion des POissons MIGrateurs (PLAGEPOMI), <http://www.rhone-mediterranee.eaufrance.fr/gestion/migrateurs/plan-gestion-2010-2014.php>

A video system allowing to observe the efficiency of the fish pass will be available online, at: http://www.devisubox.com/dv/dv.php5?pgl=Project/interface&dv_project_sProjectName=passe_a_poissons

This fish pass is specially targeting the *Alosa agone*.

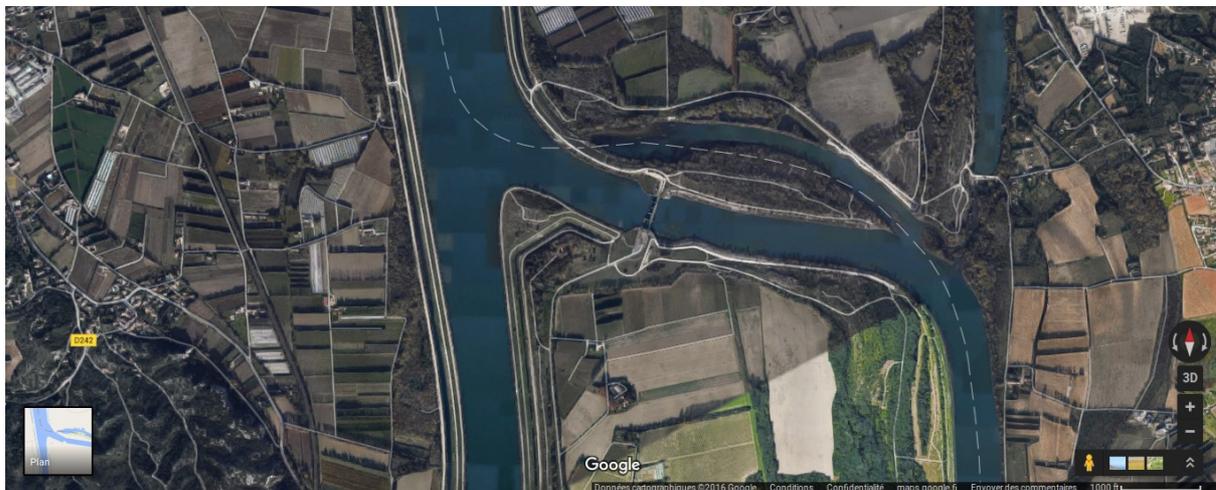
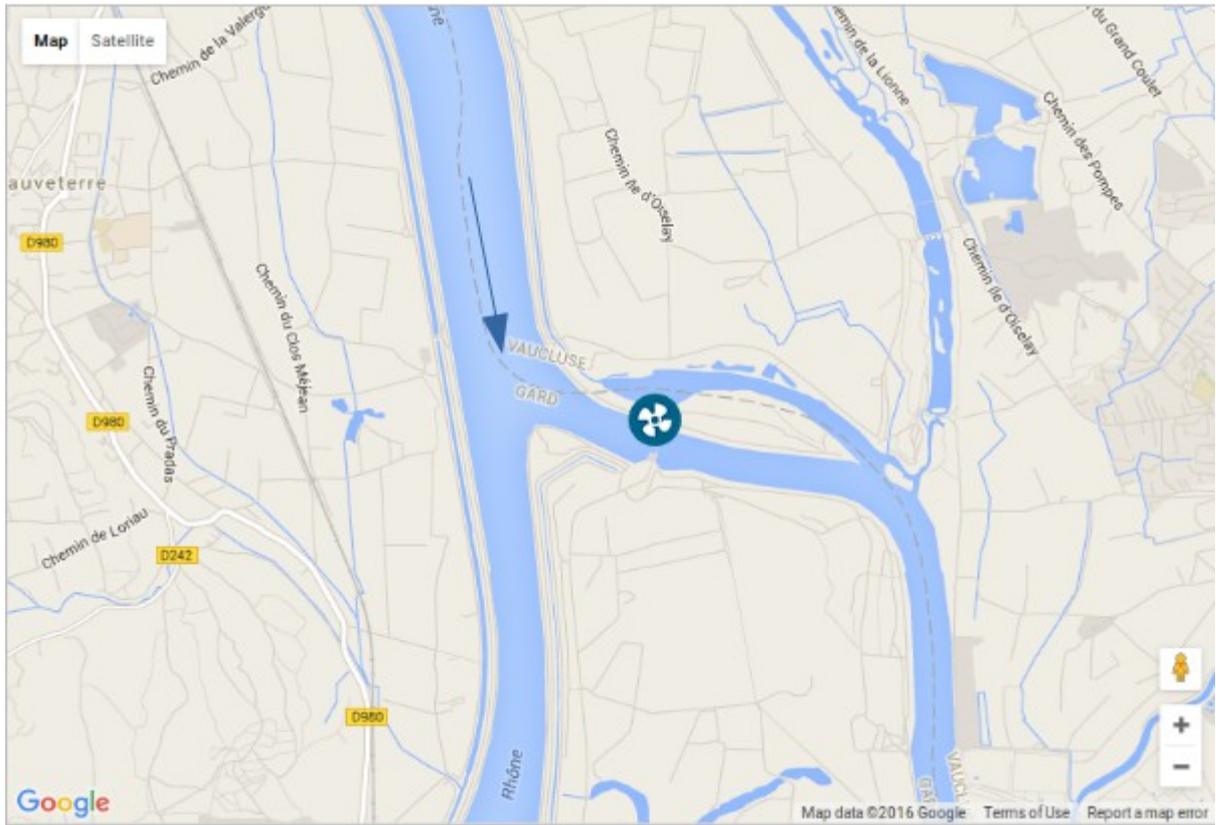
According to one of the contacted local experts, this work is exemplary in many ways: the stakes, the scale (flow of the Rhone, drop height ...), cost and technicality. It will also be the only one with a video-counting device on the Rhône River and thus will have an index of abundance and population control.

Decision

As a fish passage is now being built, according to the latest standards, we agree to allow that the electricity from the Sauveterre hydropower plant can be sold as EKOenergy.

The decision is valid for 5 years.

The contributions of the Environmental Fund could be used for further nature restoration projects in the basin of the Rhône-Méditerranée. We'll invite local organisations (such as France Nature et Environnement) to suggest projects depending on the amount of collected money.



See also:

- <http://www.rhone-mediterranee.eaufrance.fr/gestion/dce/directive.php>

- “rapport d’évaluation environnementale du SDAGE Rhône Méditerranée”-2010-2015, Agence de l’eau Rhône Méditerranée et Corse.