



BLUE PLANET PRIZE - AWARDED TO PALMIET PUMPED STORAGE SCHEME

The Blue Planet Prize

The International Hydropower Association (IHA) awarded its 2003 Blue Planet Prize to two schemes: Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme (South Africa) and Salto Caxias Hydropower Plant (Brazil)

The Prize is awarded by IHA every two years, with evaluation support by UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme. Its aim is to increase awareness of hydropower's contribution to sustainable development and to promote good practice in the use of the world's hydropower resources.

The Prize recognises good practice and sound management in the development and operation of a hydropower scheme, on the basis of technical, economic, social and environmental criteria and excellence in one or more of these aspects.

The schemes were tested in relation to the Hydropower Sustainability Guidelines, which were launched in March 2003 at the World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan.

Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme

The 400 MW Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme near Grabouw in the Western Cape was found to demonstrate excellence in relation to all the above criteria.

In particular, the scheme was noted for its contribution to the protection and management of the Cape Floral Kingdom, which includes the unique fynbos flora. During the implementation phase, extraordinary procedures were applied to minimise the impact of the construction work.

Palmiet was commissioned in 1988 as a joint venture between Eskom and the Department of Water Affairs. The partnership enabled the optimisation of scarce water resources for two purposes: to provide system stability for the integrated Eskom electricity network and for the provision of additional water supplies for the Cape Town area.

Since commissioning, care for the local environment continues to be a high priority.

Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

Fynbos grows mainly on the mountains and plains of the southern and southwestern parts of the Western Cape. Almost 70% of fynbos plant species are not found naturally anywhere else on earth.

The uniqueness and biodiversity of the Kogelberg – heart of the fynbos plant kingdom – was recognised in 1998 when UNESCO registered the area as a biosphere reserve under its MAB (Man and the Biosphere) Programme. Eskom was one of the signatories to the application for biosphere status submitted to UNESCO and is committed to upholding its objectives.

“The fact that the area, including that of the Palmiet scheme, has subsequently been designated as a UNESCO biosphere, the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, is testament to the positive role hydropower can play even within environmentally sensitive zones” (IHA Blue Planet inspection team).

Accolades

Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme has consistently demonstrated Eskom's commitment to excellence in environmental and technical disciplines:

- 1987 Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme was presented with the award for the Most Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement by the South African Institute of Civil Engineers.
- 1988 Palmiet won the award from the Environmental Planning Professions Inter-disciplinary Committee (EPPIC) for integrated environmental planning and management.

1997 Palmiet was presented with the Conserva Award for outstanding achievement in effective conservation and sustainable utilisation of the environment to ensure a better quality of living for all South Africans by the South African Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

2003 Blue Planet Prize awarded by International Hydropower Association (IHA)

Palmiet has been a leader in safety management in South Africa, and has been consistently rated a five-star performer by the international auditing body NOSA. (National Occupational Safety Association)

Palmiet is also holder of NOSA's most prestigious annual achievement award – the NOSCAR – for excelling in the fields of occupational health, safety and environmental risk management.

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See also: GI 0001 Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

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