



## Monthly Energy Update

September 2022

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**For information, contact UAE staff at 801-355-4374**

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## Rocky Mountain Power Says Storage Constraints are a Challenge

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s the growing share of electricity supplied by renewables compels utilities to rethink how they keep the power supply in line with consumers' fluctuating demand, Utah and Wyoming leaders are setting their sights on a tried-and-true pairing: water and gravity.

PacifiCorp last fall proposed 11 pumped storage hydropower projects across the West. Eight of those — four in Utah, three in Wyoming and one in Idaho — fall within Rocky Mountain Power's service territory.

"Because renewable wind and solar resources are not dispatchable, we also need to add substantial amounts of energy storage to ensure we can balance intermittent renewable generation with real-time customer energy needs," Tim Hemstreet, PacifiCorp's managing director for renewable energy development, told the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on Thursday.

Hemstreet testified alongside Spencer Nelson, managing director of research and new initiatives at energy policy nonprofit ClearPath, and Ted Wiley, president and CEO of grid-scale battery development company Form Energy, at a hearing on the potential for the deployment of various energy storage technologies.

Both Utah and Wyoming have adopted an "all-of-the-above" approach to electricity generation and storage, according to Hemstreet. The company intends to build both standalone battery facilities and combined solar and storage. And it has high hopes for the advanced nuclear reactor TerraPower plans to build at a retiring Wyoming coal plant, which, though designed to run continually, can divert hours' worth of surplus power into its own molten salt "battery."

But lithium-ion batteries, the main type utilities are currently installing, remain limited by how long they can store power, despite rapid advancements in capacity and cost.

In essence, the systems can use excess electricity to pump water upward, then let it flow back down — through turbines — to generate electricity later on. It's an option that appeals to PacifiCorp for a number of reasons, Hemstreet said: Pumped storage hydropower facilities can start up quickly, help utilities take advantage of their limited transmission capacity, be deployed at the scale the grid requires and last a really, really long time.

And, as Sen. John Barrasso, the committee's top Republican,

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