Southwest Power Pool Receives USEA 2011 Energy Industry Volunteer Partnership Award

April 22, 2011 – The United States Energy Association and the United States Agency for International Development presented the 2011 Energy Industry Volunteer Partnership Award to Southwest Power Pool, Inc. (SPP), a group of 63 members that serve more than 15 million customers in Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The award recognizes SPP’s accomplishments in sharing its experience in regional transmission planning, market development, and renewable energy integration with its overseas counterparts in Southeast Europe, the Black Sea region, and West Africa.

In presenting the award to SPP, Jonathan Hale, USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia said, “SPP embodies the best of the American volunteer spirit - a willingness to share its expertise with those that may benefit and to learn from other perspectives.”

The SPP footprint stretches from eastern New Mexico to the northern border of Nebraska. It contains some of the best wind resources in the country, if not the world. Because the wind resources are located far from load centers, they require long distance and efficient high-voltage transmission lines to deliver the power. SPP’s transmission plans provide its members with a vision for meeting a number of objectives, including providing new pathways to move lower-cost energy to load centers.

Through a series of 2010 exchange visits, workshops, and site visits, SPP shared its transmission planning experience with system operators in Southeast Europe and the Black Sea region. Like the SPP footprint, these areas possess excellent renewable energy resources in the form of wind and hydroelectric power. Transmission system operators in these regions have developed their first regional planning models through open planning processes that mirror SPP’s, and they are running simulation scenarios that optimize their national transmission networks by sharing resources through cross-border transmission ties. Several of the projects’ recommendations have resulted in the financing of new cross-border transmission lines by international financial institutions.

“SPP and its members also benefitted from these information exchanges, gaining an improved understanding of power flow techniques and a new perspective on the challenges of integrating significant penetrations of intermittent renewables into a system with a large amount of existing and potential hydro,” said SPP’s Director of Transmission Development Jay Caspary. “It’s very rewarding to work with others around the globe to find common solutions to shared problems.”

In 2003, the USAID West Africa Regional Program assisted electric utilities and energy ministries of 14 countries with power sector restructuring, policy, and regulatory reform to provide sustainable energy production for the region. The West Africa Power Pool was modeled after SPP’s structure. Through exchange visits with SPP, participants improved their capability to analyze, organize, and optimize management of the West African regional transmission system, reducing the need for costly construction of additional generation infrastructure in each individual country while improving regional reliability.

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