

SECTION II  
PRESENT SOURCES OF ENERGY

Introduction

Section II deals with the four major sources of energy currently supplying the Bay Area: fossil fuels, geothermal, hydroelectric and nuclear. Even at current levels of use, great amounts of resources are required. This raises questions about what the current sources can supply in the future.

Fossil fuels are the most common source of energy, but the dwindling supplies of these resources make their future use questionable. Hydroelectric facilities have supplied much energy in California but nearly all possible sites have been developed, and further expansion is unlikely. Geothermal energy, the harnessing of heat from the earth, does contribute to the Bay Area energy supply but cannot be depended upon for additional large quantities due to the limited availability of the resource. Lastly, nuclear energy, still in its infant stages, is locked in controversy over safety and has an undetermined future.

These four resources have different advantages and constraints. Each will be treated in terms of basic technology, availability, environmental and socio-economic impacts, resource life and potential for contributing to the future Bay Area supply.