Stainless Steel in Micro Hydro Turbines
Cover picture: Micro power plant in the Carpathian mountains
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Small, distributed renewable energy production is attractive

The necessary development of renewable energy to mitigate climate change has sparked a new interest for micro hydro power, now seen as a necessary part of the renewable energy sources mix. As the sites are usually located in remote areas, local communities are very interested in having a local energy production, which may be a source of revenue and reduce their dependence on big energy providers. In a number of cases, various incentives schemes are offered to attract investors.

Micro Hydropower (10kW – 1MW) is able to tap into small hydro potential

Water power has been recognized for more than a century as a provider of renewable electricity energy. Most of the sites suitable for medium to large hydro power production (above 1MW) have already been exploited, sometimes with big environmental concerns. Tapping into smaller streams or any low head flow with micro hydro turbines (roughly 10kW to 1MW) has thus become attractive and many small-scale projects have been carried out, or will be developed in the near future:

- On rivers and streams, environmentally friendly designs that, among other features, do not harm the fish or impact the landscape.
- Between uphill drinking water reservoirs and downhill consumer locations.
- In process industries, any significant downward fluid flow may be used to generate some power and decrease the energy requirements.

The power generated by a hydro turbine is given in the following formula:

\[ P = Q \times H \times g \times R \]

in which:

- \(P\): Power (kW)
- \(Q\): Flow (m³/s)
- \(H\): Head (m)
- \(g\): a constant 9.81 m/s²
- \(R\): efficiency ratio: about 80% or 0.8
Technologies

The main technologies used to produce hydropower are shown in Figure 1 [ref1]. A few links to videos are provided at the end of this brochure.

As can be seen on Figure 2, there is a considerable overlap in the operating range of the technologies based on Head/Flow considerations only.

The choice of the right technology depends foremost on the head and the flow of incoming water, as shown in Figure 2 (from Ref.2):
- High heads, low flow: Pelton turbines
- Low head, high flow: Kaplan or propeller-type turbines
- Intermediate: Francis, Turgo, crossflow* turbines (*also called Ossberger or Banki turbines)
Another important consideration is the efficiency of operation, particularly when there is a variation in the flow rate, Figure 3 (ref2). The cost of installation is obviously a major concern as well. Figure 4 (from Ref1) shows a typical breakdown between civil work, turbine set and control equipment costs. The environmental impact is taken into consideration, usually by providing “fish ladders” and screens that prevent the fish entering the turbine.

Very small size turbines [below 10kW], sometimes called “pico hydro turbines”, are also available. Their cumulated power output is negligible compared to the above categories and will not be considered in this publication. Flow turbines on rivers will be the next development. Currently, as demonstration units are the bulk of the installations, they will not been included in this document.
Open view of the micro hydro turbine of Caraglio, Italy
Power 61kW Head: 175m Flow: 0.04m3/s
Picture courtesy of Gugler GmbH, Austria

Nozzle and Needle for flow control of a Pelton turbine
Pictures courtesy of Lingenhoele GmbH
Francis micro hydro turbine in Kvernerud, Norway
Power: 507kW Head: 59m Flow: 1.2m³/s
Refurbishment in 2008 of a 1917 plant
Top: complete installation with turbine (blue) and generator (red)
Left: open view of turbine outlet and gates for flow control
Pictures courtesy of Hydrohrom s.r.o. Czech Republik

Kaplan micro hydro turbines
Right: Standard Kaplan in Cannunciaro, Italy
Power: 870kW Head: 11m Flow: 9m³/s
Picture courtesy of Gugler GmbH, Austria
Top: Spiral Kaplan in Lapradelle Puilaurens, France
Power: 98kW
Head: 11.7m Flow: 0.98m³/s
Picture courtesy of Hydrohrom s.r.o. Czech Republik
Stainless steels in micro hydro turbines

For all parts in contact with water, and particularly moving parts, corrosion resistance is essential.

High water impact speeds customary in impulse turbines and high flow rates of Kaplan and Francis turbines require a good cavitation erosion resistance. Stainless steel grades 1.4313 and 1.4418 are the most suitable materials for this application, and are used in all large scale turbines such as those of the huge Three Gorges dam in China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades form EN 10088-3 Standard (2014)</th>
<th>1.4313 (See Note1)</th>
<th>1.4021 (See Note2)</th>
<th>1.4301 (See Note3)</th>
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<tr>
<td>ASTM/AISI/ACI</td>
<td>ACI CA6NM</td>
<td>AISI 420</td>
<td>AISI 304 ACI CF3</td>
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<td>800 to 950</td>
<td>500 to 700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Min Elongation (%), min</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrosion resistance</td>
<td>Cavitation damage resistant</td>
<td>Wear resistant</td>
<td>Good corrosion resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main application</td>
<td>Runners and guide vanes</td>
<td>Nozzles and wear rings</td>
<td>Housing &amp; casings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1 Grade EN 1.4418 has similar properties but a better corrosion resistance
Note 2 Other grades may be used as well, with increasing wear resistance: EN 1.4028, EN 1.4034, EN 1.4122
Note 3 Grade EN 1.4317 may replace EN 1.4301. For improved corrosion resistance EN 1.4404 or duplex grades are recommended
For very low heads, grades EN1.4301 and EN1.4401 are used as well
References

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3. What is a turbine?
   https://www.turbinesinfo.com/what-is-a-turbine/


5. The choice of materials for turbines
   http://www.ivt.ntnu.no/epf/fag/tep4200/innhold/The%20choice%20of%20materials.pdf

6. Steve E. Dalton: Low Head Hydro Technologies and the need for greater uptake and implementation in the UK. An Engineer’s Perspective

7. University of Puerto Rico: Micro-Hydro
   http://www.uprm.edu/aret/docs/Ch_8_Micro_hydro.pdf

8. T. Spicher: Choosing the right materials for turbine runners
   http://www.hydroworld.com/articles/hr/print/volume-32/issue-6/articles/choosing-the-right-material-for-turbine-runners.html


10. W. Duncan Jr: Turbine Repair
    https://www.usbr.gov/power/data/fist/fist2_5/vol2-5.pdf

11. Final Report – Hylow (Hydropower converters with very low head differences)
    https://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/55207_en.html

Additional information: Videos on how hydraulic turbines work

- How a run of the River hydroelectric power station works
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rm9JqQGDwN0

- Introduction to Hydroelectric Turbines [Kaplan, Francis, Pelton]
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AT7B71Wm0tU

- Francis Turbine [in English] - How it works
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2diWBEzISM

- Francis Turbine
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD4VkJk6rk

- Kaplan and Francis Turbine [Difference] Learn and Grow
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyX0dMOZGik

- Kaplan Turbine Working, Power and Efficiency
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeljEl_aWko

- Hydraulic micro turbine design
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvQ-5ABaIaY

- Comparison of Pelton, Francis and Kaplan turbines
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOBL0KEZ3KU

- Kaplan turbine working and design
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=op03UTgpnDU

- Andritz hydro turbine animation Francis
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3MQJSDoTuw

- Andritz hydro turbine animation Pelton
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwh6N_PSZ_Q
About ISSF

The International Stainless Steel Forum (ISSF) is a non-profit research and development organisation which was founded in 1996 and which serves as the focal point for the international stainless steel industry.

Who are the members?
ISSF has two categories of membership: company members and affiliated members. Company members are producers of stainless steel (integrated mills and rerollers). The association has 56 members from all over the world and currently represents approximately 90% of the total production of stainless steel.

Vision
Stainless steel provides sustainable solutions for everyday life.

More information
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For more information about stainless steel and sustainability, please consult the sustainablestainless.org website.

Contact us
issf@issf.org
+32 2 702 89 00

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