



Press Release

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Hydropower: America's leading renewable energy resource has bright future

Washington, DC – The hydropower industry is primed to make a substantial contribution to the clean energy future of the United States. This was the message to Congress at a hearing held yesterday by the Water and Power Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee examining the growth potential of the hydropower resource.

A recent report by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) found 90,000 MW of untapped generation potential from hydropower and new waterpower technologies across the United States.

“This could produce enough energy to serve the needs of 22 cities the size of Washington, DC,” stated Tim Culbertson, general manager of Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County, Washington, in testimony before the Subcommittee.

For conventional hydropower, opportunities include capacity gains and efficiency improvements at existing facilities, new small hydropower projects, and new facilities installed on existing non-powered dams.

In fact, Grant Count PUD itself is at the forefront of this development having instituted a series of turbine replacements at its Wanapum Dam that will add 138 megawatts of capacity. Additional generator improvements will increase that number to 200 megawatts, with similar planned upgrades for another dam.

Emphasizing the resurgence of hydropower across the country are recent statistics by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that demonstrate the growth of the industry.

Currently pending before the Commission are license applications for 430 megawatts of conventional hydropower capacity and 900 megawatts of pumped storage capacity. Another 448 megawatts of conventional hydropower and 2,783 megawatts of pumped storage are before the Commission in the pre-filing stage, before a license application is submitted.

“The promise that EPRI sees for hydropower resources is beginning to bear fruit,” said Bruce Howard, director of environmental affairs for Avista Corporation, who also testified at the hearing.

The National Hydropower Association commends the Water and Power Subcommittee for holding this important hearing examining the current contributions and benefits of hydropower as well as its important role for the future.

“Chairwoman Grace Napolitano (D-CA) and Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) should be applauded for their leadership and foresight in holding this hearing,” stated Linda Church Ciocci, NHA executive director.

“With electricity demands increasing and the growing need to secure more domestic climate-friendly power, examining how to maximize the nation’s infrastructure only makes sense. Hydroelectric energy, along with the many benefits it provides, is a vital component of the nation’s energy portfolio and will only prove more so as time goes on.”

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NHA is a non-profit national association dedicated exclusively to advancing the interests of the U.S. hydropower industry, including the new waterpower technologies – ocean, tidal and instream hydrokinetic technologies. The association represents 61 percent of domestic, non-federal conventional hydroelectric capacity in the U.S. Its membership consists of more than 140 organizations including public utilities, investor-owned utilities, independent power producers, developers, equipment manufacturers, environmental and engineering consultants, and attorneys.