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For Immediate Release

President Obama signs hydropower bills into law

Enactment of laws is latest step to promote hydropower development

Washington, D.C. (August 9, 2013) – President Barack Obama today signed into law two bills aimed at boosting development of the nation’s largest renewable electricity resource, hydropower.

Both bills, H.R. 267 the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act and H.R. 678 the Bureau of Reclamation Small Conduit Hydropower Development and Rural Jobs Act, were cleared unanimously by the Senate before they adjourned for August recess. The House passed both measures earlier this year with overwhelming bipartisan support. The bills are the first significant piece of energy legislation to come out of Congress since the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

In 2012, hydropower provided the majority of the nation’s renewable electricity, with 100,000 MW of installed capacity from coast to coast. The industry employs approximately 300,000 workers and is fed by a supply chain of over 2,500 companies. Estimates done by Navigant Consulting indicate that 60,000 MW of hydropower could be added with the right policies in place, while creating 1.4 million cumulative jobs. The legislation enacted today unlocks some of that tremendous potential.

“Hydropower is America’s leading renewable, providing low-cost, reliable electricity to millions of American families,” said Linda Church Ciocci, Executive Director of the National Hydropower Association. “These bills are an excellent step to unlocking the tens of thousands of megawatts of untapped hydropower capacity that can provide millions of Americans greater access to affordable, reliable electricity. I applaud President Obama for signing them into law and for his continued support of hydropower’s role in addressing our energy, environmental, and economic challenges.”

The signing of these bills is another step by the Obama administration to promote hydropower’s role in the energy mix as the administration seeks to address climate change and move to a clean energy economy.

As part of his climate action plan released in July, the president included the Missouri River Energy Services’ Red Rock Hydroelectric Plant in Iowa on the administration’s Infrastructure Permitting Dashboard in order to develop and demonstrate improved permitting procedures for hydropower at the nation’s existing non-powered dams. The Department of Energy has estimated that such development could add 12,000 MW of hydropower capacity.

The stimulus bill, signed by President Obama in 2009, also included grants to modernize existing hydropower facilities. With just \$30 million of investment, power generation at those facilities is expected to increase enough to meet the annual electricity needs of 12,000 additional homes while avoiding 110,000 tons of carbon emissions and extending the life of the projects project by decades.

“NHA appreciates the leadership of all those who worked to get these bills from conception to enactment, especially their sponsors Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO), Rep. Scott Tipton (R-CO), Sens. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY),” said Ciocci.

H.R. 267 promotes the development of small hydropower and conduit projects and aims to shorten regulatory timeframes of certain other low-impact hydropower projects, such as adding power generation to the nation’s existing non-powered dams and closed-loop pumped storage.

“I’m so proud the House has passed a bipartisan bill that will significantly advance our ‘all-of-the-above’ energy strategy. In Eastern Washington, hydropower plays a pivotal role – whether it’s conventional, small, or conduit hydro – it provides 75 percent of electricity to the Pacific Northwest and represents a unique opportunity for job creation and energy production,” said McMorris Rodgers. “It’s clean, reliable, renewable and affordable. Unleashing American ingenuity to increase hydropower production will lower energy costs and help create thousands of jobs. The future of American energy independence depends on the development of an ‘all of the above’ energy approach – and I’m proud that hydro is finally on its way to being part of it.”

“As President Obama signs the bill I wrote with Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers into law, we launch a new path toward smarter, more efficient hydropower project permitting,” said DeGette. “For a state like Colorado, and indeed the entire nation, this legislation will expand renewable and affordable hydropower – far and away our nation’s largest source of clean energy – and create good jobs for American families. This initiative was a bipartisan effort from start to finish, and together we’ve now created a law that will help get Americans back to work and will move us forward in our nation’s clean energy leadership.”

“Today’s signing of these two bipartisan bills furthers Americans’ access to our most cost effective and reliable source of renewable energy,” said Murkowski, who introduced the Senate version of H.R. 267. “Hydropower is a critical part of our efforts to generate low-cost electricity, while at the same time reducing our carbon emissions. These measures will advance the development of small hydropower and conduit projects, and allow existing dams to be retrofitted with power-generating turbines.”

H.R. 678 authorizes small hydropower development at existing Bureau of Reclamation-owned canals, pipelines, aqueducts, and other manmade waterways. Such development could provide enough power for 30,000 American homes with no environmental impact.

“This new law provides a tremendous opportunity for Coloradans to advance clean, renewable energy production, create jobs right here at home, and send reliable and affordable power directly to the grid to lower energy costs,” said Tipton, who introduced the small conduit measure. “I’m honored that I was able to lead the charge for this commonsense effort that received broad and bipartisan support at the local, state and national levels. Hydropower is the cheapest and cleanest source of electricity available through modern technology, and a key component of the all-of-the-above energy platform that I

continue to strongly support. With the signing of the Hydropower and Rural Jobs Act into law, we have made headway in the effort to establish American energy independence and put people back to work.”

“Today, a bill to remove barriers to hydropower development, create rural jobs and lower electricity prices for American families became law,” said Barrasso (WY), sponsor of the Senate companion conduit bill, S. 306. “By cutting unnecessary Washington red tape, this law gives hydropower developers the certainty they need to move forward with new projects on over 40,000 miles of federal canals throughout the West. I’ll continue to introduce legislation that removes excessive regulations and makes it easier for our country to produce our own energy.”

NHA is already looking to the future, seeking to harness the momentum for additional policy changes to enlarge hydropower’s contributions.

“Expanding hydropower in the United States will strengthen and diversify our country’s energy portfolio. From the unanimous passage of these bills, it is clear that the development of more clean, affordable hydropower is a goal that lawmakers from both parties can get behind,” Ciocchi said. “We look to build on these successes and will continue to work with policymakers on further improvements to the hydropower licensing process.”

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