



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 19, 2013
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Witnesses Agree Federal Regulatory Changes will Benefit Current and Future Hydropower Projects

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power held an oversight hearing on *“Keeping Hydropower Affordable and Reliable: The Protection of Existing Hydropower Investments and the Promotion of New Development.”* This hearing highlighted how existing federal and non-federal hydropower resources are compromised by litigation and regulation, while new hydropower projects face uncertainty and federal inaction.

Hydropower provides abundant, renewable and emissions free energy that contributes to long-term jobs and economic growth throughout the U.S. In Washington state, hydropower accounts for 70 percent of electricity generated. Hydropower accounts for seven percent of electricity generated nationwide.

“Although hydropower is the cheapest form of electricity generation our technology has developed, it has been held stagnant, while infinitely more expensive generation has moved forward, at huge expense, both to taxpayers and ratepayers. If you want to know why your electricity bill is skyrocketing, you need look no farther than these misguided but deliberate public policies,” **said Subcommittee Chairman Tom McClintock (CA-04).**

“Our existing hydropower-producing dams are slowly being put to death by a thousand cuts. That status quo is simply unacceptable. Other developed countries, such as Canada and Sweden, embrace clean and renewable hydro-electricity and make it a national policy to protect this valuable resource. We must do the same, and if it takes additional legislation to do it, then we will pursue this option,” **said Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04).** *“Legislation must also promote hydropower. Conservation and efficiency are important parts of our energy strategy, but they will not meet demand in the long-term. We simply need to tap more of our existing non-powered and underutilized dams and canals and help facilitate new storage where necessary.”*

During today’s hearing, Committee Members heard from witnesses about how bureaucratic red tape, federal regulations and lawsuits challenge the development of hydropower.

[Leslie James](#), Executive Director, Colorado River Energy Distributors Association, testified on the importance of hydropower projects and how existing federal regulations

must be balanced. *“Federal hydropower is a valuable clean, renewable resource that faces a number of challenges today. Those challenges include the need to balance competing interests, including requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and other federal law, to maintain the affordability of the resource, and to deal with hydrological challenges like the current drought affecting the Colorado River. Opportunities exist to expand hydropower resources and federal generating agencies should be encouraged to maximize production from these resources...but those must be considered cautiously in light of potential ESA and legal requirements, and there must be a balance between costs and impacts.”*

Randy Livingston, Vice-President, Power Generation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, highlighted how improvements are necessary to ensure that federal agencies do not impose unnecessary, duplicative costs and mandates on hydropower. *“The cost and duration of the process to relicense an existing hydroelectric project can be just as cumbersome and complex as seeking a license for a new, un-built hydroelectric project. In both cases, the cost and duration associated with licensing is typically far greater than any other established electric generation technology.”*

John Grubich, General Manager, Public Utility District No. 1 of Okanogan County, Washington described the roadblocks utilities face while pursuing the addition of hydropower to existing non-federal dams. *“The key federal land management agency pursued excessive and costly additional requirements with little or no relationship to Project impacts. BLM pursued this wish list of additional measures without regard to their potentially serious economic consequences for the Project.”*

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