



July 25, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Murkowski and Walden and Ranking Members Cantwell and Pallone:

The undersigned groups are writing to express support for your continuing efforts to pass legislation to modernize the hydropower licensing process.

Hydropower is America's single largest provider of renewable electricity, making up almost one-half of all generation from renewable resources. Given that hydropower is an important source of domestic, emissions-free, baseload power needed to ensure consistent and reliable electric service, we must look to preserve and protect our existing hydropower system and promote new expansion opportunities of this important resource.

In order to do so, the current licensing process must be modernized to add accountability and transparency, eliminate inefficiencies and redundancies, and unlock innovation and advancements in technology and operations. We believe the hydropower provisions in S. 1460, the Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017, and H.R. 3043, the Hydropower Policy Modernization Act of 2017, can provide a framework for final legislation to implement this new direction in a way that protects environmental values, public participation, and all existing authorities of federal and state decision-makers in the licensing process.

Specifically, priority improvements we seek in legislation include:

- Directing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to lead the coordination of the many approvals needed for hydropower projects and to work with agencies and other licensing participants to set timely schedules;
- Holding all participants to the schedule by including mechanisms that provide consequences for undue or unjustified delays, while also providing sufficient resources and time for decision-makers to complete their work on time;
- Protecting and clarifying the important licensing improvements achieved in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 for trial-type hearings and alternative conditions;
- Clarifying that certain mandatory conditioning authority is limited to addressing actual project effects; and
- Providing new, more efficient approval processes for targeted categories of much needed and low-impact projects, such as environmentally beneficial license amendments, building on non-powered dams, and closed-loop pumped storage.

As you are aware, the current hydropower licensing process can result in both new and existing projects taking ten years or longer to receive their approvals. This not only creates uncertainty for project owners and developers alike, but burdens electricity customers with additional unnecessary costs and only delays important environmental measures that the industry, resource agencies and the environmental community agreed upon during the licensing process and want to see deployed.

In 2016 the Department of Energy released a landmark report on the benefits of the existing hydropower system and new growth opportunities. That report, *Hydropower Vision: A New Chapter for America's 1st Renewable Electricity Source*, estimated that the hydropower industry could add 50 GW of new capacity by 2050. However, we believe this growth potential will not be fully realized without the adoption of policies outlined above, many of which are within the framework provided in S. 1460 and H.R. 3043.

Once again, thank you for your work on this critical issue. Our organizations offer ourselves as a resource for you and your staff to provide any assistance and additional information that you may need.

Sincerely,

The American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE)
American Public Power Association (APPA)
Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE)
Edison Electric Institute (EEI)
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (Boilermakers)
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE)
Large Public Power Council (LPPC)
Laborers' International Union of North America (LiUNA)
National Hydropower Association (NHA)
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)
North America Building Trades Council (NABTU)
United Association of Union Plumbers, Fitters, Welders and Service Techs (UA)
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (Carpenters)