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Sent: 11/9/2017 1:24:51 AM
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Subject: GOP Chair McMorris Rodgers' Hydropower Modernization Bill Passes House



For Immediate Release
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Date: November 8, 2017
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GOP Chair McMorris Rodgers' Hydropower Modernization Bill Passes House



WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressional Western Caucus Chairman **Paul A. Gosar D.D.S. (AZ-04)**, House Republican Conference Chair **Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-05)**, House Energy and Commerce Chairman **Greg Walden (OR-02)**, Executive Vice-Chairman **Scott Tipton (CO-03)**, and Western Caucus Members **Doug Lamborn (CO-05)**, **Ralph Abraham**

(LA-05) and **Doug LaMalfa (CA-01)** issued the following statements after passage of H.R. 3043, the Hydropower Policy Modernization Act on the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives:

“Hydropower is crucial to our way of life in the Pacific Northwest. It’s clean, it’s renewable, it’s reliable, and it’s one of the reasons why we in Eastern Washington enjoy some of the most affordable electricity rates in America,” said **Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers**. “This bill won’t change outcomes or environmental standards. Instead, it will speed up the relicensing process and save time and money. Providing relief from these costly and time-consuming regulatory processes will encourage investment in hydropower so we can continue to support this clean energy in our region.”

“This bill is the culmination of five committee hearings and markups, along with several bipartisan staff meetings with the hydropower industry and tribes that have a stake in the licensing proceedings,” said **Congressman Walden**. “The supporters of this bill, such as labor and industry organizations, recognize the vital role it will play in supporting job growth, local economic development, and providing much-needed reforms to the licensing process. Hydropower generates nearly 43 percent of electricity in Oregon and this dependable baseload power has helped drive the development of everything from value-added agriculture processing to data centers, creating jobs along the Columbia River and throughout Oregon. This emissions-free energy resource should not be bogged down in bureaucratic red tape any longer. At the end of the day, this important legislation promotes hydropower development, creates jobs, and provides consumers across the country with continued access to clean, affordable and reliable baseload power generation.”

Congressman Gosar said, “The hydropower licensing backlog at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is unfortunate, but ultimately unacceptable if our country is going to achieve its true energy potential. Projects which are perfectly compliant with all relevant regulation are being held up for years due to a web of redundant referrals and the lack of a unified timetable for application reviews. Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers’ bill threads the needle by designating FERC as the lead coordinating agency in order to eliminate redundancy and speed the process. This bill will also drastically decrease costs to relicense non-federal dams - a huge win for the West.”

Congressman Tipton said, “Hydropower continues to play an important role as we work to develop an all-of-the-above energy strategy in the United States. The current licensing process for hydropower projects includes too many barriers and unreasonable wait times. The Hydropower Policy Modernization Act of 2017 will help cut through some of the bureaucratic red tape that is preventing the development of this responsible and affordable energy source.”

“This bill simply intends to bring hydropower permitting into the 21st Century by improving efficiency, accountability and transparency within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission while also reducing federal duplication. Even our friends across the aisle agree with our efforts to promote hydropower development. I look forward to continuing to work with the Congresswoman and the Committee to continue supporting clean, renewable hydropower and advancing our nation’s 'all-of-the-above' energy strategy,” said **Congressman Lamborn**.

Congressman Abraham said, "Streamlining our permitting process will cut the costs of doing business. I'm for anything that will let our small businesses develop faster and put more people to work, and this bill takes a smart approach to letting them do just that."

“Hydropower is a common sense use of California’s waterways to potentially power thousands of homes. Unfortunately, it can take up to a decade to license a new project or relicense existing

infrastructure. This legislation is about modernizing that process and streamlining licensing requirements so that important projects can move forward as opposed to stalling for years. Local input is a critical component of this, as the 1st district is home to two of California's biggest hydro plants at Oroville Dam and Shasta Dam. It's important that we are able to utilize this practical and environmentally friendly method of producing energy," said **Congressman LaMalfa**.

Background:

Western Caucus Analysis

Hydropower has been a significant contributor to our country's energy infrastructure, having played a major role in the creation and pathing of the modern energy grid. Hydropower infrastructure generates massive amounts of power, especially in Western States. In the 13 western-most states, hydropower contributes **more than 22%** of all electricity generation. In states like Washington, Oregon and Idaho, hydropower is responsible for more than half of those states' electricity generation.

H.R. 3043 bill makes clear that hydropower is a renewable resource for purposes of all federal government programs and is a critical source of energy in the U.S. Specifically, the bill would define the term 'renewable energy' as electric energy generated from solar, wind, biomass, landfill gas, ocean (including tidal, wave, current, and thermal), geothermal, or municipal solid waste, or from a hydropower project.

Hydropower is already the most profuse of the renewable sources of energy, making up 46% of the energy generated in that category. But the potential to expand hydropower is promising. In fact, a **report by the Obama-era Department of Energy** concluded that U.S. hydropower production could grow by nearly 50% from current levels by 2050 by upgrading existent facilities, developing new facilities, and converting existent non-power-generating dams – approximately 97% of the country's current dam infrastructure – into hydropower facilities. That percentage could be even higher if the assumptions underlying it – including the fact of a stifling regulatory atmosphere – were adjusted.

The scale of existent hydropower infrastructure and its power generation capabilities, therefore, is matched only by its potential for expansion as our nation's preeminent clean renewable. In what is now a familiar story for energy generation, however, the prospect of hydropower's continued reliability and development will be subject to serious challenges by federal regulation absent legislative remedies. In particular, hydropower is stifled by decentralized regulatory jurisdiction by federal agencies and lack of recourse for administrative decisions which impede hydropower development despite statutory and regulatory compliance thereof.

Presently, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) exercises jurisdiction over 1,600 non-Federal hydropower projects at more than 2,500 dams under the Federal Power Act. FERC is authorized to issue renewable licenses lasting 30-50 years as well as time-unlimited exemptions for qualifying dams. According to FERC, the relicensing workload is increasing drastically; between FY 2017 and FY 2030, roughly 480 projects amounting to 45 percent of FERC-licensed projects will begin the relicensing process. Further, FERC is currently processing nearly 5,000 licensing and exemption-related filings each year, which is also expected to increase significantly.

The fact that multiple agencies and entities at the level of federal, state, local and Indian tribe are involved in the license review process, but that the process itself lacks overarching timetables and deadlines, means that the backlog at FERC is likely to become unsustainable absent reforms

which establish unified timetables and clearly demarcate agency jurisdictions during the course of a given application review period.

H.R. 3043 addresses these problems by establishing FERC as the centralized body issuing deadlines and defining parameters for other agencies involved in the hydropower application review process. The bill represents a vision for the future of American hydropower and job creation wherein the necessary demands of regulatory compliance and environmental sustainability work together with emerging technologies to ensure maximal development of our nation's energy production capacity. More than 143,000 people are employed in the hydropower industry.

Courtesy Energy and Commerce Committee

The House of Representatives today passed another Energy and Commerce Committee bill, H.R. 3043, the Hydropower Policy Modernization Act of 2017 by a vote of 257-166. H.R. 3043, sponsored by committee member and Conference Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), seeks to modernize the licensing process for hydropower facilities.

Today, hydropower is the largest renewable energy source for electricity across the United States. It is an essential component of an all of the above energy strategy and there is tremendous opportunity to expand this emissions-free energy resource. However, the duration, complexity, and uncertainty of the hydropower licensing process has created significant barriers, preventing investments that would create jobs and benefit consumers.

H.R. 3043, the Hydropower Policy Modernization Act, would modernize the permitting process by: Improving administrative efficiency, accountability, and transparency; requiring timely decision making; and, reducing duplicative oversight from the multiple federal agencies that review hydro applications by designating the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as the lead agency.

Click [HERE](#) to read the text of the bill.

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