



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

Opportunities/Challenges for Maintaining Existing Hydropower Capacity/Expanding Hydropower at Non-Powered Dams/Increasing Pumped Storage Hydropower: U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources Hearing

01/12/2022

The United States Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources held a January 11th hearing titled:

The Opportunities and Challenges for Maintaining Existing Hydropower Capacity, Expanding Hydropower at Non-Powered Dams, and Increasing Pumped Storage Hydropower ("Hearing")

The Full Committee *Hearing* focuses included:

- Examination of the opportunities and challenges for maintaining existing hydropower capacity
- Expanding hydropower at non-powered dams
- Increasing pumped storage hydropower

Witnesses testifying at the Hearing included:

Ms. Jennifer Garson

Acting Director of the Water Power Technologies Office

U.S. Department of Energy

Ms. Garson addressed:

- Hydropower and its role in the electricity sector
- Department of Energy and the hydropower RDD&D portfolio
- Department of Energy support for licensing and relicensing hydropower
- Hydropower research and grid flexibility
- Expanding Hydropower through non-powered dams
- Expanding pumped storage in the United States
- Hydropower and remote communities

The Honorable Camille Touton

Commissioner

Bureau of Reclamation

Ms. Touton:

- Addresses on-going efforts to protect existing federal hydropower investment
- Provides an overview of on-going efforts to promote new hydropower development
- Discusses challenges the Bureau of Reclamation faces because of drought, reduced runoff conditions, and low reservoir elevations
- States the Bureau of Reclamation will continue to review/assess potential new hydropower projects that provide high economic return, are energy efficient and protect fish and wildlife, the environment or recreation

Mr. Scott Corwin

Executive Director

Northwest Public Power Association

Mr. Corwin discusses:

- Overview and hydropower's role in the West
- Challenges to hydropower such as:
 - Leveling the playing field for federal incentives for hydropower;
 - Flexibility, resilience, and proper market valuation;
 - Permitting challenges and next steps;
 - Operational flexibility needed under FERC license articles;
 - Data-driven collaboration for predictive analytics for system management;
 - Dam safety regulation; and,
 - Regulatory burdens to removing sediment from projects.
- Incentives for hydropower: leveling the playing field
- Grid resilience, flexibility, and proper valuation of hydropower in markets
- Challenges in permitting and next steps
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission should allow operating flexibility to meet critical needs
- Data-driven collaboration to maintain hydropower capacity
- Dam safety regulation

Mr. Malcolm Woolf

President and CEO

National Hydropower Association

Mr. Woolf suggested the following for the Senate's consideration:

- Hydropower is an essential part of a clean, reliable, and affordable 21st Century grid
- The baseload renewable electricity provided by the existing U.S. hydropower fleet is at risk
- Stanford's "Uncommon Dialogue" process has created a historic new opportunity for bipartisanship
- Building upon the recent Bipartisan Infrastructure package, Congress should advance the 3Rs by enacting S.2306, the Maintaining and Enhancing Hydropower and River Restoration Act and S.2356, the 1st Century Dam bill
- Congress needs to address the lack of certainty involved in the hydropower license and relicensing process

- Congress Should Promote New Renewable Generation at Existing Nonpowered Dams, and Support DOE's Water Power Technology Office (WPTO), as well as Investments to Maintain and Expand the Existing Federal Hydropower Fleet

A link to the list of witnesses and their prepared statements can be downloaded [here](#).