

American Hydropower: Unleashing Reliable, Renewable, Clean Power Across the U.S.: U.S. Energy & Commerce Hearing



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The Subcommittee on Energy, Climate and Grid Security of the United States Energy & Commerce Committee (“Committee”) held a September 20th hearing entitled:

American Hydropower: Unleashing Reliable, Renewable, Clean Power Across the U.S. (“Hearing”)

A focus of the *Hearing* was H.R. 4045 which is denominated the “Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act.”

The Committee staff prepared a Memorandum in advance of the *Hearing* which provided background on hydropower. It opined that hydropower is:

. . . an essential component of an “all the above” energy strategy for the United States.

Hydropower is stated to have accounted for 6.2% of all United States electricity generation and 29% of electricity generation from renewables in 2022.

The Committee Memorandum states:

- An opportunity to expand hydropower production exists
- Less than 3% of the United States dams (approximately 2,200) produce electricity
- A U.S. Department of Energy report found that U.S. hydropower production could grow by almost 50% from current levels by 2050 by:
 - Upgrading existing hydropower facilities
 - Adding generating capacity to existing non-powered dams and canals
 - Developing new hydropower facilities

An additional discussion identifies what are described as the “benefits of clean, baseload hydropower to the nation’s economic and energy security.”

The Memorandum also addresses:

- Hydropower Licensing under the Federal Power Act
- Cooperating Agencies for environmental and Resource Review

H.R. 4045 is discussed and described as amending the Federal Power Act to:

. . . modernize the hydropower licensing process and promote next-generation hydropower projects.

The legislation is stated to require that the non-federal hydropower licensing process be expedited by mandating that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and all resource agencies with responsibilities in licensing projects to establish a schedule to coordinate reviews. This would be subject to interagency dispute resolution by the Council on Environmental Quality and penalties for failure to meet scheduled deadlines.

Issues that were to be addressed at the Hearing include:

- Challenges and opportunities to expand hydropower production in the United States;
- Improving interagency cooperation and coordination to license hydropower projects; and
- Legislative recommendations to expand hydropower production.

Witnesses included:

[Terry Turpin](#)

Director of the Office of Energy Projects

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[John Hairston](#)

Administrator

Bonneville Power Administration

[Thomas P. Smith](#)

Chief of Operation and Regulatory Division

Army Corps of Engineers

[Matt Lee-Ashley](#)

Chief of Staff

Council on Environmental Quality

A copy of the staff Memorandum can be downloaded [here](#).