

Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security:
“American Hydropower: Unleashing Reliable, Renewable, Clean Power
Across the U.S.”
September 20, 2023
As prepared for delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to our witnesses.

Hydropower is a vital source of energy for the U.S., especially for Eastern Washington.

It is an essential component of House Republican’s all-of-the-above approach to energy...

...a renewable, carbon-free, baseload power source that grid operators can dispatch in a moment’s notice.

Renewable energy from sources like weather-dependent wind and solar can play a role in America’s overall energy mix, but they cannot replace hydropower, especially in terms of reliability.

Just ask the people of California, a state that imports a significant amount of hydroelectric power from Washington state.

California relies on hydropower to balance its grid when inconsistent resources like wind and solar can’t produce enough energy to meet demand.

For these reasons, we must protect and modernize our existing hydropower fleet, and expand production where we can.

My legislation, The Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act, will do just that.

The Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act, H.R. 4045, could help double hydropower production in the U.S...

...modernize an outdated permitting process, promote next-generation hydro technologies...

...and eliminate barriers to new dam development.

This bill will also enhance coordination among dozens of agencies by authorizing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to set schedules, clarify responsibilities, and resolve disputes.

H.R. 4045 builds on the important permitting reforms contained in H.R. 1, the Lower Energy Costs Act, to expand clean, reliable, and affordable energy for the American people.

We know hydropower is an especially vital resource in the Pacific Northwest, which is home to the Columbia-Snake River system.

There are over 60 dams in the Columbia River Basin, including the four Lower Snake River dams.

This system helped transform our region from a dry, barren sagebrush... to one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world.

They have strengthened our energy grid ... and lowered energy costs for families and businesses ... all while reducing carbon emissions.

In fact, the dams along the Columbia-Snake River system provide more than one-third of all the hydropower capacity in the United States.

They provide critical flood control benefits, supply water for irrigation, and make it possible for farmers to barge their products ... wheat, apples, potatoes ... all across America ... and to countries around the world.

Unfortunately, not everyone sees it that way.

Dam breaching advocates like President Biden, Governor Inslee, and Senator Murray want to tear out these dams.

I am deeply concerned that these conversations are already happening at the highest levels of government ... with the Biden Administration's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) secretly coordinating with environmental groups behind closed doors...

... and ignoring the voices of the people whose livelihoods depend on them.

Let me be clear ... breaching the Lower Snake River dams would permanently harm our way of life in Washington, not to mention all the other states in the region that have come to rely on them.

Over the past two years, I have led a series of letters demanding transparency in this mediation process to ensure ALL voices are heard in the debate over the future of these dams.

I'd also like to remind our witnesses from the administration here today that Congress – and Congress alone – has the authority to change the operations of the federally-operated Snake River dams.

That's why I've introduced legislation to protect the dams and the many benefits they provide.

As we work towards a final outcome, we must consider the facts, prioritize transparency, and utilize sound science and input...

... from all tribes, industry groups, and the people in our Pacific Northwest communities...

... not just a small group of radical organizations and overreaching government officials whose sole focus is to rip out the dams.

Hydropower is a vital part of a strong energy mix in the U.S...

...one that will help to lower energy costs, enhance grid reliability, and ensure America continues to be a global leader in reducing emissions.

I look forward to discussing this important resource and hearing from our witnesses, who all play an important role in hydropower licensing and permitting.

I'd like to thank them for being here and I yield back.