

# WPUDA supports hydropower licensing reform

*PUDs rely on generation of clean, renewable hydropower to serve communities. A streamlined hydropower relicensing process is needed to preserve existing hydropower resources for the benefit of the ratepayers.*



## SUPPORT HOUSE RESOLUTION 3043

According to the Department of Energy Hydropower Report, “Hydropower has the potential to increase the flexibility and stability of the U.S. electric grid and to support the integration of additional clean energy resources.” Hydropower is an important source of domestic, emissions-free, flexible power and is the foundation of our clean-energy resources in the Northwest.

Unfortunately, the current licensing process is antiquated and results in new and existing projects taking up to 10 years or longer to receive approvals. The lengthy and expensive regulatory regime stymies new project development and renders existing projects uneconomic. It creates uncertainty for project owners and developers, and places hydropower at risk.

WPUDA supports a legislative approach (House Resolution 3043, The Hydropower Modernization Act of 2017) to address the problem without compromising environmental protections. The bill improves the process by promoting accountability and transparency, requiring greater cooperation among federal and state agencies, and reducing needless duplication of effort. The bill does the following:

- Designates the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) as the lead agency for coordinating all federal authorizations and reviews related to hydropower license applications, including compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. FERC must establish a process to set a schedule for the review and disposition of each federal authorization following the filing of an application for a license, license amendment, or exemption.
- Expands the definition of “renewable energy” to include electric energy generated from hydropower projects.
- Authorizes FERC to extend the length of time of preliminary permits and to extend the time limit that a licensee has to commence construction on a hydropower project.
- Authorizes the use of trial-type hearings to resolve disputes related to a hydropower license application. Under certain circumstances, the hearing may be demanded by applicants or other parties for any disputed issues of material fact.
- FERC must consult with federal and state agencies and the public to compile best practices for performing studies and environmental reviews in connection with the timely and efficient completion of hydropower license proceedings.
- The bill creates a process to approve license amendments for qualifying hydropower projects.

With the need for clean, renewable resources in our state and country sooner rather than later, HR 3043 is necessary to realize the environmental benefits of an electricity resource that produces zero greenhouse gas emissions.

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