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Tipton Hydropower Bill Eliminates Unnecessary Paperwork to Create Jobs, Expands Use of Clean Affordable Energy

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Subcommittee on Water and Power today held a [legislative hearing](#) on [H.R. 2842](#), the “Bureau of Reclamation Small Conduit Hydropower Development and Rural Jobs Act of 2011,” introduced by Rep. Scott Tipton (CO-03). The legislation streamlines burdensome red tape and reduces administrative costs for the installation of increased small canal and pipeline hydropower development projects. Increased small hydropower installation will create local jobs, add clean, inexpensive electricity to the grid and supply the federal government with additional revenues while modernizing infrastructure. The Family Farm Alliance, the National Water Resources Association and the American Public Power Association have endorsed the bill.

“At a time when our country needs to focus on domestic energy production and job creation, hydropower can play a critical role in providing clean renewable energy while expanding job opportunities in rural America,” said Rep. Tipton. “If enacted, this legislation will streamline the regulatory process and reduce administrative costs for small hydropower development at Reclamation’s facilities while supporting the creation of badly needed rural jobs.”

“I want to commend our subcommittee members Scott Tipton and Paul Gosar who are spearheading the effort to clear away these bureaucratic obstacles that stand between this nation and literally thousands – if not tens of thousands – of megawatts of clean, cheap, abundant and reliable hydroelectricity,” said Water and Power Subcommittee Chairman Tom McClintock. “This simple and commonsense solution means vast quantities of hydroelectricity – without a single new dam and at a cost to the government of precisely nothing. That means more jobs, cheaper and cleaner electricity, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and less reliance on foreign sources of energy – that’s what this administration is currently blocking. All they have to do is get out of the way. But they won’t.”

“H.R. 2842 is a common-sense proposal that reduces regulatory red tape and will facilitate the expansion of low-cost emissions-free hydropower Reclamation facilities in Arizona and across the country,” said Rep. Paul Gosar (AZ-01). “Rural areas like Arizona’s First Congressional District have been hit hardest by the economic downturn. Legislation like H.R. 2842 is exactly the type of initiative Congress should seek to implement quickly, efficiently, and safely to spur economic development in rural areas, support American energy independence, and put people back to work at no cost to the taxpayer.”

At the hearing witnesses explained the need to streamline the burdensome regulatory process for installing conduit hydropower and the benefits to local communities.

Grand Ward, Water and Power Consultant to Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation and Drainage spoke about the tremendous potential for small hydropower in his district that, *“has a potential of building 14 to 17 units...of those 17 units we can generate a total of approximately 2200kws, which could provide enough electricity to power 550 to 1000 homes, or about 6 to 7 of our deep well pumps for irrigation.”* Ward also extrapolated on small hydropower efficiency that can be used to *“reduce the requirement from the electrical district so they can avoid overloads or brownouts on the lines”* and can also *“generate some income from the sale of the power to offset operational costs.”*

Robert Lynch of Robert Lynch and Associates, who represents the Irrigation and Electrical Districts Association of Arizona, testified on behalf of the National Water Resources Association that *“we are literally sitting on a hydropower gold mine waiting for the needed clarifications and streamlining that will cut costs and make this program more attractive.”* Lynch noted that, *“these small hydropower units installed in existing ditches and canals could effectively replicate the maximum output of Glen Canyon Dam all by themselves in Colorado alone.”* Lynch recognized Congress’ opportunity to *“not only create, in very small increments, a considerable new clean renewable resource but to stimulate a fledgling industry that can bring jobs to depressed rural areas throughout the West.”*

Chris Treese, External Affairs Manager at Colorado River Water Conservation District, explained the redundant and costly regulations for new conduit hydropower, which would be installed on already disturbed ground that has undergone environmental review. Treese testified that *“environmental reviews under NEPA are universally time-consuming and expensive...the River District’s current experience with NEPA on a non-construction action has taken over a year and nearly--\$1 million in outside expenses.”* He explained that the duplicative *“environmental reviews of small hydro on existing conduits represent and unnecessary and often chilling uncertainty.”* Treese reassured the panel that because the bill establishes *“hydropower as a secondary project purpose subservient to Congressionally authorized project purposes...should reduce concerns about potential environmental impacts, because water delivery, as a primary purpose, will continue as it has historically.”*

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