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Litigation and Regulation Threatens Hydropower, Costs Jobs and Increases Electricity Rates

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Continuing House Republicans' efforts to advance the American Energy Initiative, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power held an [oversight hearing](#) today on "*Protecting the Federal Hydropower Investment: A Stakeholder's Perspective*." At the hearing, Members examined the challenges facing hydropower generation and stressed the need for increased hydropower as part of an all-of-the-above energy approach.

"The impediments that hydroelectricity generators now face, and the costs that these impediments impose on the family budgets of millions of Americans and on job creation come at a time when Americans suffer the most prolonged period of high unemployment since the Depression," said Subcommittee Chairman Tom McClintock. "Hydropower is by all accounts the cheapest and cleanest electricity available to modern technology. And yet, no major hydro-electric facility has been built in many years, and our existing facilities are being bled dry by endless litigation and regulatory obstacles that result in major increases in electricity prices and chronic shortages of electricity."

The Western Area Power Administration, which delivers federal hydropower in most of the West, at one time estimated that 16% of its overall operating costs were attributed to the Endangered Species Act, most of which were passed down to customers. Common sense regulatory reform is needed to protect existing hydropower and invest in new hydropower resources to provide additional clean, cheap electricity to ratepayers.

"My district in central Washington contains the heart of the Federal Columbia River Power System. This network of federal dams and reservoirs has provided emissions-free, reliable hydropower for generations. However, these investments and economic drivers are under constant assault. They are repeatedly targeted by bureaucratic regulation, lawsuits, and even the whims of a federal judge," said Chairman Hastings. "A true commitment to renewable energy requires a commitment to protecting existing hydropower dams and the many benefits they provide. I'm committed to pursuing an 'all-of-the-above' energy approach for our nation. This is a top priority for the Natural Resources Committee. Hydropower is a key part of this strategy. We simply need more of this original, renewable energy."

Seemingly endless litigation and regulation have curtailed hydropower generation, which

is typically replaced with more expensive, carbon emitting electricity. Over the past decade, Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) electricity ratepayers have lost 1,000 megawatts of electricity and pay an estimated \$800 million per year in indirect and direct costs associated with complying with endangered salmon requirements.

Many dams, such as the four lower Snake River dams, are also under constant assault from groups that want them breached in order to help endangered species. Breaching these dams will cost jobs, increase carbon emissions and raise electricity rates while doing nothing to help salmon. At the hearing, Chairman Hastings pledged that as long as he is Chairman of the Committee and in Congress that the Snake River dams “will remain intact and functioning.”

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