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**Statement of**  
**The Honorable Doc Hastings**  
**Ranking Republican**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Water and Power Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on**  
***“Investment in Small Hydropower: Prospects of Expanding Low-Impact and Affordable***  
***Hydropower Generation in the West”***  
**July 29, 2010**

I'm pleased to be here today since hydropower has a profound and direct impact on the Pacific Northwest and the nation.

The goal of today's hearing is to expand so-called “low-impact” hydropower. There are, indeed, opportunities to accomplish this task through efficiency upgrades at existing facilities and installing more hydropower at canals and pipelines. We should examine how the legal, administrative and financial barriers have kept us from realizing this potential.

More importantly, we also need to focus on protecting our existing hydropower resources that have helped create the West, win world wars and fuel our economy. The current hydropower system is being attacked by a thousand cuts through never-ending litigation, court-imposed policies and regulatory regimes. To dream of how more-expensive tidal, wind, solar and incremental hydropower will make up for that loss ignores the reality of diminishing conventional hydropower resources.

Existing federal hydropower facilities have kept the lights on and powered our farms for generations, yet they are under constant assault. My region is a case study of how the environmental movement has undermined the existing hydropower system.

The Federal Columbia River Power System has provided clean, renewable, low-cost and emissions-free hydropower to millions throughout the Pacific Northwest. Despite these benefits, this power system – and many like it throughout the West – has been under assault from litigation and regulations. For example, the four lower Snake River dams continue to be a target by environmental litigants and are now back on the table for potential removal due to the actions of this Administration. Yet, the fact remains that dam removal is an extreme action that would only increase the carbon footprint and increase electricity rates during tough economic times – and that wouldn't actually recover endangered fish.

While American Rivers and other organizations wave the flag of litigation in their constant and long-term battle to remove working dams, existing hydropower is also undermined by ill-conceived policies. Despite the fact that the Northwest Fisheries Service Center found that juvenile fish transported in barges resulted in significantly higher adult salmon survival rates, federal agencies continue to bypass the hydroelectric turbines and instead spill water. This does little other than increase reliance on more-expensive fossil fuels and drive up electricity consumer rates – while not helping fish.

Existing Northwest hydropower is also being negatively impacted by regimes to send more wind power to California. The federal hydropower system has been used to back-up intermittent wind generation, but that system has limits. In fact, when wind velocity exceeds forecasts, the Bonneville Power Administration is forced to spill water and lose hydropower generation. This harms existing hydropower resources – at the expense of Northwest ratepayers and to the benefit of Californians.

I appreciate the witnesses for being here today. These are very important issues that deserve the attention of this Committee. Thank you.