
May 20, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input as the authorization process for the 2024 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) continues. As you know, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is the national service organization for America's member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives, many of which depend on hydropower projects operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). With over 900 not-for-profit rural electric utilities providing electricity to over 42 million Americans in 48 states, we are writing to underscore several hydropower priorities our members support for inclusion in WRDA.

Hydropower accounts for nearly 37 percent of renewable electric generation in the United States, 93 percent of commercial energy storage, and more than 7 percent of total U.S. electric generation. Making full use of our nation's hydropower resources is critical to ensuring a resilient, reliable, and secure electric grid that can meet the increasing demands of our ever-more electrified economy. More than 600 electric co-ops in 34 states purchase over 10 gigawatts of federal hydropower at-cost from the Federal Power Marketing Administration's (PMAs) hydropower facilities. Because the Corps is the largest generator of hydropower in the United States, NRECA members have a strong interest in ensuring that the provisions included in WRDA bolster the value of the power resource that the Corps makes available to the PMAs.

We are eager to work with you towards a successful and timely 2024 WRDA bill. As you continue through that process, please consider these important priorities that we believe strengthen hydropower generation at Corps multi-purpose projects:

Protect the Lower Snake River Dams. Stop implementation of the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative, which poses a grave threat to the operations of the Lower Snake River Dams, will ultimately result in the breaching of the dams, and threatens electric reliability for the entire region.

Preservation of PMA rate making authority. PMA Administrators must retain rate setting authority to prevent federal power customers from disproportionately bearing repayment costs for work that is

misallocated to hydropower production. This policy request has been championed by Congressman Mike Collins (R-GA).

Apply Dam Safety Assurance Authority and reduce the cost share appropriately. The dam safety modifications needed at the Missouri River main-stem dams meet the state-of-the-art provision in the Dam Safety Assurance Authority; therefore, Congress should direct the Corps to apply the Dam Safety Assurance Authority to these projects (Garrison, Oahe and Ft. Peck) and appropriately reduce the cost share for hydropower customers. Congressman Dusty Johnson (R-SD) is leading this policy request.

Identify Solution for Stockton Lake Multi-Use Capabilities. Codify an innovative compromise at Stockton Lake that balances the needs of water supply and hydropower generation. Missouri Congressmen Mark Alford (R-MO) and Eric Burlison (R-MO) have led support for this policy request.

Produce WRDA 2022 Willamette Valley Projects Report. Direct the Corps to complete the WRDA 2022 Congressionally directed timeline report on power authorization at the Willamette Valley Projects. This policy request is being led by Oregon Congresswomen Lori Chavez DeRemer (R-OR) and Val Hoyle (D-OR).

Strengthen SWPA Financial Security. Establish a revolving fund for the Southwestern Power Administration (SWPA) to use for the operation and maintenance of power transmission facilities and other related expenses. A self-financing fund would provide improved long-term financial planning and funding certainty to support continued infrastructure investments.

Electric cooperatives enjoy a productive partnership with the federal government and the communities we serve. We appreciate your consideration of these priorities and look forward to working with you on policies that support rural America.

Sincerely,



Jim Matheson
CEO, NRECA