



THE HYDROPOWER CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE ACT OF 2021 (H.R. 1588)

The Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act modernizes the federal hydropower licensing process and promotes next-generation hydropower projects.

SUMMARY:

The Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act expands clean, renewable, reliable, and affordable hydropower production in the United States and promotes innovation of the next generation of hydropower and pumped storage hydro technology. With smart policies that streamline permitting and invest in innovation, America's hydropower and pumped storage hydro can play a key role strengthening grid reliability and modernizing the U.S. energy system.

HISTORY:

The Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act was introduced in June 2020 and reintroduced in March 2021. The bill increases regulatory certainty for private-sector investments into the U.S. fleet, one of our nation's largest renewable energy resources. It addresses many of the fundamental problems facing potential developers and existing owners, such as establishing predictable licensing timelines and recognizing "early improvements" by developers in subsequent licenses. The current relicensing process can last well over a decade and drives up costs on the industry.

SPECIFICS:

The Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act makes several sensible improvements to the federal licensing process to promote domestic hydropower development and invest in advanced hydropower technologies, including:

- **Expand Hydropower Production:** The bill affirms the role of hydropower as an essential renewable resource and updates Federal renewable purchase requirements to include hydropower.
- **Modernize Licensing Process:** The bill designates the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as the lead agency for the purposes of all Federal authorizations and for complying with any required State or local environmental reviews. The bill also improves coordination among permitting agencies by setting schedules, clarifying responsibilities, and establishing mechanisms to resolve disputes among licensing participants.
- **Promote Next-Generation Hydropower:** The bill provides special licensing terms for small hydropower projects that are unlikely to jeopardize threatened or endangered

species or critical habitat and expedites licensing for next-generation hydropower projects that utilize technologies that protect, mitigate, or enhance environmental resources.

- **Reduce Market Barriers:** The bill requires a report to Congress containing recommendations to reduce barriers to the development of conventional, pumped-storage, conduit, and emerging hydropower technologies. The bill also encourages proper compensation for the full range of services that hydropower provides to the electric grid, including grid reliability and the cost-effective integration of renewables.

ORIGINAL SPONSORS:

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)

CO-SPONSORS:

Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA); Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-SC); Rep. Larry Bucshon (R-IN); Rep. John Curtis (R-UT)

SUPPORT:

ClearPath Action; National Hydropower Association; Northwest Public Power Association; Chelan Public Utility District; Grant County Public Utility District; Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions; American Conservation Coalition.

CONGRESS.GOV LINK:

[H.R. 1588](#)