



Hydropower Relicensing Reform

August 2017

Key Messages:

- NWPPA supports modernizing the hydropower relicensing process, which can take over ten years in some cases.
- Streamlining the hydropower licensing process would allow applicants to move through the process in a more timely, efficient, and affordable manner.

Background:

Both of last year's energy bills, S. 2012, "the Energy Policy Modernization Act," and H.R. 8, "the North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act," included bipartisan hydropower licensing improvements to streamline the process and provide an optimal balance with environmental priorities. Although the two versions differed in some respects, both would make the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) the lead agency on hydropower relicensing. FERC would be authorized to create a schedule and coordinate other federal, state, and local agencies with authorities and responsibilities under federal law. The Senate bill would have also expanded the definition of renewable energy for federal programs, to include all forms of hydropower.

In the 115th Congress, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) has advanced the "Hydropower Policy Modernization Act," a stand-alone bill similar to the provisions in H.R. 8, and it has been approved by the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Republicans and Democrats are still working to find a bipartisan compromise that would retain the important roles of state and federal resource agencies while staying true to the aims of the bill: to speed up the process.

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA) reintroduced an omnibus energy bill that includes a version close to what was included in S. 2012. **The Senate could vote on that larger bill next month.**

The two versions still have some distance between them and will need to be reconciled before being sent to the President's desk. Last year, divisions between the chambers were too significant to overcome before the end of the year deadline, and the provisions were left out of a slimmed-down conference report (which itself was unable to make it across the finish line).