

Uncommon Dialogue on Hydropower, River Restoration, and Public Safety

May 2023 Update

The following email provides updates on recent and upcoming activities within the Uncommon Dialogue (UCD) on Hydropower, River Restoration, and Public Safety.

Working Group (WG) 6 Improve Federal Hydropower Licensing, Relicensing, and License Surrender Processes

Licensing Reform Package Introduced in the Senate: On May 10, Sen. Steve Daines (R - MT) and Sen. Maria Cantwell (D – WA) introduced the Uncommon Dialogue licensing reform package in the U.S. Senate. The bill, the Community and Hydropower Improvement Act, consists of a collection of amendments to the Federal Power Act developed through more than a year of work by the Working Group 6 Drafting Team and supported by more than 20 Uncommon Dialogue participant organizations including tribes, tribal organizations, river conservation organizations, and hydropower industry representatives. As noted in the joint Uncommon Dialogue news release (<https://www.hydro.org/news/senators-introduce-bipartisan-bill-to-improve-the-hydropower-licensing-process-restore-authority-to-native-american-tribes/>) on the bill's introduction, the package would help address climate change, better protect the health of the nation's rivers, expedite licensing of qualifying projects at non-powered dams and closed-loop pumped storage, ensure that mandatory license conditions submitted under sections 4(e) and 18 of the Federal Power Act address effects of the licensed project, and provide some Tribes long-sought authority over their lands and waters. Here's (<https://www.daines.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Community-and-Hydropower-Improvement-Act-One-Pager.pdf>) a one-pager on the bill, and here's (<https://www.daines.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Community-and-Hydropower-Improvement-Act-Daines-Cantwell.pdf>) the full text.

Plenary Group and Planning Group

Preparing for 2023: During April and May, the Planning Group met bi-weekly to prepare for the workshop at NHA's Waterpower Week (<https://waterpowerweek.com/>) for the WG 8 on Workforce Development and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). Additionally, the Planning Group met with the leads for DOE's Hydropower Vision to discuss synergies between efforts and opportunities for collaboration.

WG 1 Accelerate Development of Hydropower Technologies and Practices to Improve Generation Efficiency, Environmental Performance, and Solar and Wind Integration

Exploring Innovations and Technologies on Dam Safety, Removal, and Rehabilitation and River Restoration: The Co-Chairs of WG 1 are in the early stages of planning engagement activities and gathering information for potential topics for a second white paper. The potential focus of the paper is Dam Safety, Removal, and Rehabilitation and River Restoration and the Co-Chairs are exploring these topics through informational interviews with a cross-section of perspectives across the UCD. WG 1 looks to advance this information gathering phase in the next few months.

WG 2 Dam Safety

Dam Inventory Gap Analysis: WG 2 is developing a concept paper to outline research tasks related to understanding gaps in dam inventories and evaluations, and identifying ways in which the UCD can address dam safety with better data on unregulated or underregulated dams in order to promote safe oversight, rehabilitation, retrofit, and/or removal of dams. Dam safety is a topic addressed through recent federal legislation and appropriations, and within collaboratives like the UCD. However, one barrier to advancing dam safety is not knowing exactly, or even roughly, how many dams are:

- * In various stages of needing maintenance,
- * Not adequately regulated by their appropriate regulatory agency (due to resource limitations), or
- * Without clear oversight.

The goal of this research is to identify dams that are not currently inventoried, attempt to broadly document their condition, and recommend ways to:

- * Improve the safety of U.S. state-regulated dams through research and development;
- * Build a collaborative model grounded in principles of shared learning and dialogue;
- * Encourage collaborative efforts between federal partnerships, national labs, and universities on RD&D, along with increased funding; and
- * Identify other ways to advance dam safety in the U.S. and encourage appropriate action.

WG 2 looks to advance this research in the next few months in order to inform a suite of actions to take to address dam safety within the UCD.

WG 3&5 Increase Basin-Scale Decision-Making and Access to River-Related Data and Advance Effective River Restoration through Improved Off-site Mitigation Strategies

Basin-Scale Subgroup Members Continue to Revise the Draft White Paper, A Basin-Scale Approach to Planning and Licensing: Operations, Considerations, and Recommendations: The next WG3&5 meeting will be scheduled for later this spring once an updated draft of the white paper has been shared with the full WG for their review. In the meantime, the basin-scale subgroup members will

be presenting a dialogue and discussion on basin-scale planning at the NHA Midwest Regional Meeting/Midwest Hydro Users Group meeting on April 25.

WG 4 Improve the Measurement, Valuation of, and Compensation for Hydropower Flexibility and Reliability Services and Support for Enhanced Environmental Performance

Policies to Incentivize Enhanced Environmental Performance, Hydropower Evaluation Tool, and Methane: WG4 met on March 13, March 27, April 24, and May 22 to discuss attributes of enhanced environmental performance to include in a policy document. WG 4 will meet regularly over the coming months to draft a policy document defining mechanisms for incentivizing enhanced environmental performance. WG 4 members will also continue to track developments related to the Idaho National Lab's Hydropower Valuation Flexibility Tool. In addition, several WG 4 participants have prepared a first draft of a fact sheet that explores the state of the science surrounding methane emissions at hydropower reservoirs. The fact sheet has been circulated to WG 4 members for review and will be discussed at an upcoming group meeting.

WG 7 Policy, Strategy, and Implementation of the 3 Rs (Rehabilitation, Retrofit, and Removal)

Collaborating on NDSP, the 21st CDA, and more: WG7 continues to meet every other week. The group is coordinating with legislative leaders on reintroducing the 21st Century Dams Act (CDA), and reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Program (NDSP). The group also continues to track and support agency implementation of the \$2.3 billion for the 3R's included in the 2021 infrastructure bill. If you are interested in participating in WG7, please reach out to Katy Kennedy at kkennedy@kearnswest.com (mailto:kkennedy@kearnswest.com) .

Tribal Engagement

Increasing Engagement with Tribes: The UCD Tribal Engagement Team is focused on increasing awareness of how potential Tribal priorities and visions could be incorporated into the UCD in an effort to deepen Tribal involvement and reflect Tribal priorities in the working groups.

WG 8 Workforce Development

WG 8's First Meeting: The UCD hosted a workshop at NHA's Waterpower Week Conference to begin scoping the potential focus and path forward for a new WG on workforce development and DEIA. The UCD is exploring convening this new WG that will focus on the future and diversity of the hydropower, river restoration, and public safety workforces, driven in part by the coming wave of retirements. The purpose of the workshop was to:

* Provide an overview of current workforce development and DEIA challenges, opportunities, and initiatives; and

* Begin brainstorming the scope of work and path forward for WG 8.

Workshop participants included a cross-section of representatives from the hydropower, river restoration, and public safety communities, including equity and environmental justice experts, resource agency staff, tribal representatives, and human resources specialists. Please reach out to Kelsey Rugani (krugani@kearnswest.com (<mailto:krugani@kearnswest.com>)) if you are interested in learning more. Please also note that this in-person workshop will be the first in a series - if you couldn't join this one, there will be more opportunities to get involved in WG 8 in the future, including a follow-up webinar.

Uncommon Dialogue Media

The Dartmouth Alumni Magazine has published an article about the history and future of the Uncommon Dialogue, titled "Dam Nation (<https://dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/articles/dan-reicher-stanford-hydropower>)", highlighting Dan Reicher and the many Dartmouth Alumni that participate in the Uncommon Dialogue.

If there are others you think would like to get engaged with the Uncommon Dialogue, please forward their contact information to Katy Kennedy (kkennedy@kearnswest.com (<mailto:kkennedy@kearnswest.com>)).

For more information on the Uncommon Dialogue, refer to Stanford's Uncommon Dialogue website: <https://woods.stanford.edu/research/hydropower>.

Please feel free to contact Dan Reicher (dreicher@stanford.edu (<mailto:dreicher@stanford.edu>)) or Kelsey Rugani (krugani@kearnswest.com (<mailto:krugani@kearnswest.com>)) if you have any questions!