

# Uncommon Dialogue on Hydropower, River Restoration, and Public Safety

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## May 2024 Update

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

### Plenary

The Uncommon Dialogue Plenary convened on Thursday, April 18, in Washington, D.C. and online. Thank you to everyone who participated! The discussion was centered around the 3R's (Rehabilitation, Retrofit, and Removal), and agency representatives and UCD leads shared information about work done by UCD to date and implementation of funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Additionally, the group shared ideas for future opportunities around the 3R's and potential new topics, including marketing, pumped storage, and grid valuation.

We want to share a special thanks to the Planning Group, Katie Schmidt, Cody Holt, the Working Group Co-Chairs, and Frankie Green for their assistance in convening a successful Plenary meeting.

### Planning Group

Working Group Progress and Plenary Planning: During the beginning of the year, the Planning Group members have been meeting with the co-chairs for the Working Groups to review their progress and provide guidance. Additionally, the Planning Group has been preparing for the upcoming Plenary meeting.

### Working Group (WG) 1 Accelerate Development of Hydropower Technologies and Practices to Improve Generation Efficiency, Environmental Performance, and Solar and Wind Integration

Innovations for Dam Safety Workshop and Technological Advancements White Paper: WG 1 and WG 2 will be hosting a virtual workshop on Innovations for Dam Safety on Friday, April 26 from 12 p.m.-2 p.m. ET. The workshop will include speaker presentations and discussion and will focus on technologies and innovations aimed at modernizing dam safety for hydropower operations, public safety, and environmental sustainability. WG 1 and WG 4 also hosted a workshop on Innovations for Sustainability on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The content and discussion from these workshops are being used to develop a white paper that explores advancement, adoption, and scaling of these

technologies as well as gaps, obstacles, and barriers. The white paper will be completed by the end of May.

### WG 2 Dam Safety

Dam Safety Gap Analysis and Concept Paper Underway: WG2 members have been actively reviewing the Draft Dam Safety Gap Analysis Report, which outlines key dam safety policy challenges and potential approaches to addressing them. Issues outlined in the paper relate to increasing dam jurisdiction, advancing emergency action planning, building public education and awareness, advancing hazard potential classification systems, advancing risk-informed decision-making, developing staffing and workforce, developing state advocacy coalitions, and strengthening federal dam safety programs. WG2 anticipates finalizing the Gap Analysis by mid-April and developing a Concept Paper that expands on these issues to be complete by the end of May.

### 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 White Paper Underdevelopment and WG 3&5 Reconvening: Basin-scale subgroup members continue to revise the draft white paper, A Basin-Scale Approach: Options, Best Practices, and Recommendations to Advance Basin-Scale Planning and Licensing. The draft will be distributed to WG 3&5 members for review ahead of the next WG 3&5 meeting scheduled for May 9, 2 – 4 p.m. ET. The goals of the meeting are to share updates on basin-scale and off-site mitigation efforts, discuss feedback on the draft basin-scale paper, confirm next steps for basin-scale and off-site mitigation subgroups, and confirm next steps for WG 3&5 overall.

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

WG4 Tackling EEP Definitions, Reservoir Emissions, and Grid Valuation: WG4 members are developing a draft concept paper to help inform policy makers (e.g., state legislators) who are considering environmental requirements for hydropower programs on environmental safeguards and the value necessary to support these environmental improvements. WG4 members will also meet in May to advance discussions on stakeholder perspectives on the allocation of reservoir emissions. Finally, WG4 members continue to advance planning for a pilot test of the hydropower flexibility valuation tool.

### WG 6 Improve Federal Hydropower Licensing, Relicensing, and License Surrender Processes

Legal Analysis of the Federal Power Act: The group is preparing a legal analysis of the Federal Power Act that will identify sources of conflict and potential improvements in the hydropower

licensing process. The concept paper will serve as the basis for outreach and discussion of these issues in the coming year; the group is preparing a plan to engage agencies and other key interested parties.

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

BIL Implementation and Outreach: WG 7 participants have begun compiling outreach materials related to distribution and implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to educate hydropower stakeholders about the various programs for funding for dam removal, retrofit, and safety improvements. The group is also working on a plan to share the educational materials following an analysis of audiences that may have been missed in previous outreach efforts.

### WG 8 Workforce Development

Subcommittees Kick-off: Both the Current Programs and Workforce Data subcommittees have kicked off, starting work on a concept paper to capture stakeholder insights and document best practices for creating an inclusive workplace, as well as a gaps analysis to assess the gaps between the existing hydropower workforce and a workforce that reflects diversity of all kinds and attracts young professionals to and from remote, underserved communities. The co-chairs continue to prepare to kick off the two other subcommittees focused on education and marketing.

### Tribal Engagement

Recent Outreach: Over the last couple months, Ridges to Riffles Indigenous Conservation Group has partnered with American Rivers to conduct outreach to Tribes and Indigenous people and groups. Outreach has included a Tribal Participation Group meeting in February, a Tribal-focused listening session in March, and one-on-one interviews to understand priorities and perspectives that will inform a tribal engagement framework. Ridges to Riffles and American Rivers are currently processing the input on what meaningful engagement and participation could look like in the Uncommon Dialogue moving forward.

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) (<mailto:kkennedy@kearnswest.com>)).

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