

October 13, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer and Leader McCarthy:

We write to transmit an important new agreement between representatives of the U.S. hydropower industry and the U.S. environmental and river conservation communities. The “*Joint Statement of Collaboration on U.S. Hydropower: Climate Solution and Conservation Challenge*” (Joint Statement), represents an important step to help address climate change by both advancing the renewable energy and storage benefits of hydropower and the environmental and economic benefits of healthy rivers.

The *Joint Statement* is the result of a two-and-a-half-year dialogue, co-convened by Stanford University, through its Uncommon Dialogue process, and the Energy Futures Initiative, to bring together a diverse range of representatives of the U.S. hydropower industry and the environmental and river conservation communities. The parties are motivated by two urgent challenges. To rapidly and substantially decarbonize the nation’s electricity system, the parties recognize the role that U.S. hydropower plays as an important renewable energy resource and for integrating variable solar and wind power into the U.S. electric grid. At the same time, our nation’s waterways, and the biodiversity and ecosystem services they sustain, are vulnerable to the compounding factors of a changing climate, habitat loss and alteration of river processes. Our shared task is to chart hydropower’s role in a clean energy future in a way that also supports healthy rivers.

There are more than 90,000 existing dams throughout the country, of which about 2,500 have associated hydropower facilities for electricity generation. In the next decade, close to 30 percent of U.S. hydropower projects will come up for relicensing. As such, the parties focused on three potential opportunities:

- *Rehabilitating* both powered and non-powered dams to improve safety, increase climate resilience, and mitigate environmental impacts;
- *Retrofitting* powered dams and adding generation at non-powered dams to increase renewable generation; developing pumped storage capacity at existing dams; and

enhancing dam and reservoir operations for water supply, fish passage, flood mitigation, and grid integration of solar and wind; and

- *Removing* dams that no longer provide benefits to society, have safety issues that cannot be cost-effectively mitigated, or have adverse environmental impacts that cannot be effectively addressed.

The potential development of new “closed loop” pumped storage to increase capacity to store renewable energy, including variable solar and wind, was also a focus of the dialogue. Closed loop pumped storage systems do not involve construction of a new dam on a river, but they may have other impacts that need to be avoided, minimized or mitigated, including impacts to surface and ground water.

The parties found inspiration in a precedent-setting 2004 agreement involving Maine’s Penobscot River where the Penobscot Nation, the hydropower industry, environmentalists, and state and federal agencies agreed to a “basin-scale” project to remove multiple dams, while retrofitting and rehabilitating other dams to increase their hydropower capacity, improve fish passage and advance dam safety. After project completion in 2016, total hydropower generation increased, more than 2,000 miles of river habitat had improved access for the endangered Atlantic salmon and other species of sea-run fish, and the Penobscot River again helps support the realization of treaty rights and other aspects of tribal culture for the Penobscot Nation.

Driven by the urgent need to address the twin challenges of climate change and river conservation, the parties have identified seven areas for joint collaboration, specifically:

1. Accelerate Development of Hydropower Technologies and Practices to Improve Generation Efficiency, Environmental Performance, and Solar and Wind Integration
2. Advocate for Improved U.S. Dam Safety
3. Increase Basin-Scale Decision-Making and Access to River-Related Data
4. Improve the Measurement, Valuation of and Compensation for Hydropower Flexibility and Reliability Services and Support for Enhanced Environmental Performance
5. Advance Effective River Restoration through Improved Off-Site Mitigation Strategies
6. Improve Federal Hydropower Licensing, Relicensing, and License Surrender Processes
7. Advocate for Increased Funding for U.S. Dam Rehabilitation, Retrofits and Removals

Over the next 60 days, the parties have agreed to invite other key stakeholders, including tribal governments and state officials, to join the collaboration, and to address implementation priorities, decision-making, timetables, and resources.

In sum, the parties agree that maximizing hydropower's climate and other benefits, while also mitigating the environmental impacts of dams and supporting environmental restoration, will be advanced through a collaborative effort focused on the specific actions developed in this dialogue. The parties are committed to seizing these critical and timely opportunities.

We would be pleased to follow up with you or your staff to provide additional information and answer questions regarding the Joint Statement of Collaboration and next steps. Please contact Dan Reicher of Stanford University at dreicher@stanford.edu (802-377-9138); or Jeanette Pablo of the Energy Futures Initiative at jmpablo@energyfuturesinitiative.org (202-468-9688).

Sincerely,

The Parties to the Joint Statement of Collaboration



World Wildlife Fund



Union of Concerned Scientists



Great River Hydro



American Whitewater



Natel Energy



National Hydropower Association



Eagle Creek Renewables



Low Impact Hydropower Institute



Rye Development



Hydropower Reform Coalition



Hydropower Foundation



Conveners of the Joint Statement of Collaboration

Woods Institute for the Environment Stanford
University



Steyer-Taylor Center for Energy Policy and
Finance
Stanford University

Stanford
Steyer-Taylor Center for
Energy Policy and Finance

Energy Futures Initiative
Washington, DC



October 13, 2020

Hon. Dan Brouillette
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy

Hon. Neil Chatterjee
Chairman
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Hon. David L. Bernhardt
Secretary of Interior
U.S. Department of Energy

Hon. Richard Glick
Commissioner
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Hon. Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Hon. James Danley
Commissioner
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Hon. Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget

Hon. Mary B. Neumayr
Chair
Council on Environmental Quality

Hon. Scott Spellmon
Lieutenant General
Army Corps of Engineers

Dear Administration Officials:

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The *Joint Statement* is the result of a two-and-a-half-year dialogue, co-convened by Stanford University, through its Uncommon Dialogue process, and the Energy Futures Initiative, to bring together a diverse range of representatives of the U.S. hydropower industry and the environmental and river conservation communities. The parties are motivated by two urgent challenges. To rapidly and substantially decarbonize the nation’s electricity system, the parties recognize the role

that U.S. hydropower plays as an important renewable energy resource and for integrating variable solar and wind power into the U.S. electric grid. At the same time, our nation's waterways, and the biodiversity and ecosystem services they sustain, are vulnerable to the compounding factors of a changing climate, habitat loss and alteration of river processes. Our shared task is to chart hydropower's role in a clean energy future in a way that also supports healthy rivers.

There are more than 90,000 existing dams throughout the country, of which about 2,500 have associated hydropower facilities for electricity generation. In the next decade, close to 30 percent of U.S. hydropower projects will come up for relicensing. As such, the parties focused on three potential opportunities:

- *Rehabilitating* both powered and non-powered dams to improve safety, increase climate resilience, and mitigate environmental impacts;
- *Retrofitting* powered dams and adding generation at non-powered dams to increase renewable generation; developing pumped storage capacity at existing dams; and enhancing dam and reservoir operations for water supply, fish passage, flood mitigation, and grid integration of solar and wind; and
- *Removing* dams that no longer provide benefits to society, have safety issues that cannot be cost-effectively mitigated, or have adverse environmental impacts that cannot be effectively addressed.

The potential development of new “closed loop” pumped storage to increase capacity to store renewable energy, including variable solar and wind, was also a focus of the dialogue. Closed loop pumped storage systems do not involve construction of a new dam on a river, but they may have other impacts that need to be avoided, minimized or mitigated, including to surface and ground water.

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Driven by the urgent need to address the twin challenges of climate change and river conservation, the parties have identified seven areas for joint collaboration, specifically:

1. Accelerate Development of Hydropower Technologies and Practices to Improve Generation Efficiency, Environmental Performance, and Solar and Wind Integration
2. Advocate for Improved U.S. Dam Safety

3. Increase Basin-Scale Decision-Making and Access to River-Related Data
4. Improve the Measurement, Valuation of and Compensation for Hydropower Flexibility and Reliability Services and Support for Enhanced Environmental Performance
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Over the next 60 days, the parties have agreed to invite other key stakeholders, including tribal governments and state officials, to join the collaboration, and to address implementation priorities, decision-making, timetables, and resources.

In sum, the participants agree that maximizing hydropower’s climate and other benefits, while also mitigating the environmental impacts of dams and supporting environmental restoration, will be advanced through a collaborative effort focused on the specific actions developed in this dialogue. The parties commit themselves to seizing these critical and timely opportunities.

We would be pleased to follow up with you or your staff regarding the Joint Statement of Collaboration and next steps. Please contact Dan Reicher of Stanford University at dreicher@stanford.edu (802-377-9138); or Jeanette Pablo of the Energy Futures Initiative at jmpablo@energyfuturesinitiative.org (202-468-9688).

Sincerely,

The Parties to the Joint Statement of Collaboration (*cont’d on p. 4*)

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Low Impact Hydropower Institute



Great River Hydro



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Stanford University



Steyer-Taylor Center for Energy
Policy and Finance
Stanford University



Energy Futures Initiative
Washington, DC



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Kevin Allis
Executive Director
National Congress of American Indians

Kitcki Carroll
Executive Director
United South and Eastern Tribes

Ann McCammon Soltis
General Counsel
Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife
Agencies

Terri Par
Executive Director
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians

Scott R. Vele
Executive Director
Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes

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Stanford University



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Stanford University



Energy Futures Initiative
Washington, DC



October 13, 2020

Bill McBride
Executive Director
National Governors Association

David Terry
Executive Director
**National Association of State Energy
Officials**

Lori Spragens
Executive Director
Association of State Dam Safety Officials

Jim Ogsubry
Executive Director
Western Governors' Association

Greg White
Executive Director
**National Association of Regulatory Utility
Commissioners**

Maury Galbraith
Executive Director
Western Interstate Energy Board

Don Welsh
Executive Director
Environmental Council of the States

Jay Lucey
Executive Director
Coalition of Northeastern Governors

Jesse Heier
Executive Director
Midwestern Governors Association

Ken Nemeth
Executive Director
Southern States Energy Board

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