



The Community & Hydropower Improvement Act Senator Daines and Senator Cantwell

The Community and Hydropower Improvement Act bolsters hydropower production throughout the United States by streamlining the permitting and licensing process, increasing tribal engagement and oversight, expediting low impact projects, promoting healthy habitat, and coordinating federal decision making.

Hydropower accounts for nearly 30% of the share of renewable energy generated in the United States. Hydropower projects have a wide range of benefits, including providing immediate power to the electrical grid, reliable backup power during outages, and conservation, as well as flood control, trade and agricultural benefits.

This legislation – the largest bipartisan licensing reform in decades – was informed by years of discussion across a wide range of stakeholders, including members of the hydropower industry, environmental organizations, conservation groups, and Tribes. Reform is needed to quickly and safely relicense existing hydropower facilities and bring new hydropower projects online to ensure American energy security.

The Community and Hydropower Improvement Act will

- Expedite the permitting process by:
 - Directing FERC to establish a two-year process to grant licensing for adding hydropower to qualifying non-powered dams.
 - Allowing collaboration between relevant agencies on Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Environmental Assessments (EAs) without losing the ability to participate in the licensing proceedings.
 - Clarifying the scope of environmental effects that may be considered in hydropower relicensing.
- Increase Tribal engagement by:
 - Providing mandatory conditioning to federally recognized Indian tribes with respect to projects located on lands held in legal title by the United States in trust for the benefit of a Tribe.
 - Extends authority to Tribes with treaty-protected rights to submit license recommendations to submit license recommendations to FERC for protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife resources.
- Expedite low impact projects by:
 - Directing FERC to create a three-year process for completing the licensing process for closed-loop and off-stream pumped storage projects.
- Promotes healthy habitats by:
 - Directing FERC, other resource agencies, and Tribes to evaluate possible benefits that fish passage or downstream environmental improvements may have on fish species and reasonably foreseeable hydrological changes during the license term.
 - Including environmental considerations for species protected under treaty obligations with Tribes.
- Coordinate federal decision making by:
 - Directing FERC to convene a conference with agencies that have conditioning authority in hydropower licensing to seek to establish a joint schedule to permit the timely completion of all federal authorization decisions.