

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](mailto:dreicher@stanford.edu) (802-377-9138); or Jeanette Pablo of the Energy Futures Initiative at [jmpablo@energyfuturesinitiative.org](mailto: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:

We write to transmit an important new agreement between representatives of the U.S. hydropower industry and the 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:

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- *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
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.

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

American Rivers



World Wildlife Fund



Union of Concerned Scientists



National Hydropower Association



Eagle Creek Renewables



Low Impact Hydropower Institute



Great River Hydro



Rye Development



American Whitewater



Hydropower Reform Coalition



Natel Energy



Hydropower Foundation



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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

**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**

Dear Tribal Leaders:

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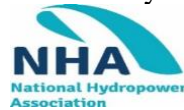
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Energy Futures Initiative  
Washington, DC



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**

Dear State Association Leaders:

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**Stanford**

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