



# Citizens' Climate Lobby

## The Community and Hydropower Improvement Act (S.1521)

The Community and Hydropower Improvement Act (S.1521) introduced by Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) and Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), 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

Hydropower is critical to achieving the goal of a resilient, cleaner and reliable electricity grid. Hydropower accounts for nearly 30% of the share of renewable energy generated in the United States and about 6.2% of total U.S. electricity generation. Hydropower energy generation has tremendous growth potential through multiple avenues like adding capacity at non-powered dams, expanding existing facilities through upgrades and efficiency improvements and can play a key role in expanding energy storage capacity through new pumped storage projects.

### The Community and Hydropower Improvement Act

- **Expedites 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) clarifying the scope of environmental effects that may be considered in hydropower relicensing.
- **Increases Tribal engagement by:** Extending authority to Tribes with treaty-protected rights to submit license recommendations to FERC for protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife resources.
- **Expedites 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.
- **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.

### Status

S.1521 was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water and Power. A legislative subcommittee hearing on the bill was held on July 19, 2023.