



Hydropower Policy Priorities 2025

The Hydropower Reform Coalition believes our country can have a secure and robust energy supply, clean water, and healthy ecosystems by making smart choices. Hydropower has a place in our nation's energy supply, but that place must be carefully determined to both ensure that hydropower assets meet the changing needs of our grid and to minimize the impacts on rivers from this energy source.

IMPACTS OF HYDROPOWER

All power generation – including hydropower – impacts ecosystems and communities. While some descriptions of hydropower focus strictly on its relatively low emissions, assessing hydropower's sustainability, and its position within policies, requires a broader assessment of environmental and social impacts.

Dams can harm rivers and communities by blocking the migration of economically important fish such as salmon; turning rivers into warm, still reservoirs that grow algae; disrupting the natural timing, volume, and duration of flows in a river, and imposing serious public safety and economic risks for nearby communities with aging dam infrastructure.

We believe the following principles will avoid the worst impacts of hydropower and help to ensure that hydropower's inclusion in the nation's energy supply protects clean water and the people that depend on it.



ENSURE THE CLEANEST WATER

Clean water and healthy communities are important to everyone and are drivers of economic prosperity and well-being. We must ensure that our rivers provide the cleanest water for drinking, growing food, and recreating and that these waters bring prosperity to the people and communities reliant upon them. Hydropower projects can negatively impact the quality of our waters and communities if not operated well. To ensure we have the cleanest water and the healthiest communities, we must:

- Maintain provisions of the Federal Power Act and Clean Water Act that protect water, rivers, and the surrounding environment at hydropower projects.
- Ensure that natural resource agencies are given the resources they need to protect our waters and ecosystems.
- Support technology innovation through research and development of new tools and technologies through the Department of Energy's Water Power Technology Office.



INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE SAFETY

Much of America's infrastructure is aging rapidly. Aging and poorly maintained hydropower infrastructure puts lives at risk and make surrounding communities less safe. This drives up costs for consumers and increases the risk of catastrophic damage to downstream rural communities. To keep people and communities safe, we must:

- Ensure strong dam safety standards and well-funded dam safety programs.
- Require dam owners to repair or remove aging or unsafe dams.
- Provide tax credits and financial incentives for safety or environmental upgrades or dam removal of unsafe dams.



IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF REGULATORY PROCESSES

America needs reliable and affordable energy. When permitting timelines for hydropower are unpredictable and take longer than they are designed to, it drives up costs for ratepayers. A thorough and efficient licensing process or license surrender process is key to controlling costs, keeping electricity bills low for families and businesses, and restoring rivers. To ensure license decisions are predictable and efficient, we must:

- Reform the licensing process by setting deadlines and requiring collaboration and information sharing among agencies.
- Create a license surrender process that is predictable, timely, and considers the removal of aging or unsafe project facilities.



HONOR PROMISES AND PROTECT SACRED LANDS

Tribal nations have an important role in decisions around hydropower and the stewardship and protection of federal lands. They have close relationships with their ancestral lands and knowledge that stretches back generations making them ideal stewards of their lands and resources. Promises to Tribal nations should be honored and their sovereignty over their lands respected and strengthened. To honor our promises and protect sacred lands, we must:

- Delegate authority over the management and decision making for Tribal lands and sacred sites to Tribal nations.
- Strengthen the authority of Tribal nations to decide what infrastructure development is appropriate for their lands and sacred sites.



**HYDROPOWER
REFORM
COALITION**

The Hydropower Reform Coalition is a diverse consortium of more than 160 national, regional, and local conservation and recreation organizations with a mission of protecting, enhancing, and restoring America's rivers, watersheds, and communities affected by hydropower operations. Our combined membership and supporters represent more than 1.5 million people across the country.