DOC HASTINGS, WA
CHAIRMAN
DON YOUNG, AK
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TN
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX
ROB BISHOP, UT
DOUG LAMBORN, CO
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA
PAUL C. BROUN, GA
JOHN FLEMING, LA
MIKE COFFMAN, CO
TOM McCLINTOCK, CA
GLENN THOMPSON, PA
JEFF DENHAM, CA
DAN BENISHEK, MI
DAVID RIVERA, FL
JEFF DUNCAN, SC
SCOTT R. TIPTON, CO
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ
RAÚL R. LABRADOR, ID
KRISTI L. NOEM, SD
STEVE SOUTHERLAND II, FL
BILL FLORES, TX
ANDY HARRIS, MD
JEFFREY M. LANDRY, LA
CHARLES J. "CHUCK" FLEISCHMANN, TN
JON RUNYAN, NJ
BILL JOHNSON, OH

TODD YOUNG
CHIEF OF STAFF

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

EDWARD J. MARKEY, MA
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER
DALE E. KILDEE, MI
PETER A. DeFAZIO, OR
ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA, AS
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA
RUSH D. HOLT, NJ
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, AZ
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU
JIM COSTA, CA
DAN BOREN, OK
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN, CNMI
MARTIN HEINRICH, NM
BEN RAY LUJÁN, NM
DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN, VI
JOHN P. SARBANES, MD
BETTY SUTTON, OH
NIKI TSONGAS, MA
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR
JOHN GARAMENDI, CA
COLLEEN W. HANABUSA, HI

JEFFREY DUNCAN
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

May 3, 2011

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Chu:

With renewable energy capacity increasing in the United States, it is critical to address electricity grid integration challenges now in a way that demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of the grid. An opportunity exists to do that with the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA's) recent proposal to modify transmission contracts with wind power generators in the region to curtail wind electricity generation during periods of high wind and high water runoff that occur in late spring and summer. I have concerns about this proposal and believe that less intrusive alternatives must be fully considered and the short and long term impacts of BPA's proposed Record of Decision be further examined.

We are at a turning point in our electricity system in the United States. Renewable energy is becoming cheaper, distributed generation is becoming more common, and energy efficiency and demand response are reducing the need to build much new generation capacity. But integrating these new models into the existing electricity system presents new challenges as well. The situation with possible curtailment of wind production in the Northwest is an early example of these challenges. I encourage you to leverage the full expertise and resources of the Department of Energy (DOE) to help address challenges such as these.

I understand that BPA must balance all of its responsibilities in managing the Federal Columbia River Power System and agree that protecting fish and upholding the biological opinions is a critically important public policy objective, as is ensuring the reliability of the electricity system. I believe these goals can be achieved without curtailing wind production.

The proposed Record of Decision would shut down the region's wind power facilities during times of high runoff at the region's dams and low electricity demand in the West. While these high wind/high water events occur relatively infrequently, this

action, if implemented, would economically impact current facilities and could lead to the cancellation of future wind projects in the region. This would create enormous uncertainty in the market at a time when the Obama Administration is promoting increased investments in renewable energy technologies.

Therefore, I strongly encourage DOE to work with BPA to consider all potential alternatives to address high-runoff scenarios including: (1) the displacement of thermal electricity generation in the West, (2) managing the transmission grid and generation dispatch more effectively and efficiently, (3) better weather forecasting techniques and (4) evaluation of options for exporting to other regions the excess power generated during such high-runoff/high wind scenarios.

I ask that BPA pursue these and all other options that may be available to avoid a situation that could severely limit current wind production and future development in the Pacific Northwest as well as set a negative precedent nationally for addressing future renewable energy integration challenges. Please report back on progress in addressing these issues at the earliest possible time.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources