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For Immediate Release

Industry honors Congressional hydropower champions *NHA's annual conference kicks off in Washington, DC*

Washington, D.C. (April 28, 2014) – Four members of Congress were honored by the hydropower industry today at the National Hydropower Association's (NHA) Annual Conference for their legislative efforts to promote the development of the nation's untapped hydropower potential.

Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Diana DeGette (D-CO), were presented with NHA's Legislator of the Year award for their successful advocacy of the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act (HREA) of 2013, which passed both houses of Congress unanimously and was signed into law last year.

"Passing energy legislation, or any legislation for that matter, in today's political climate is truly deserving of recognition," said Linda Church Ciocci, Executive Director of NHA. "Without the unrelenting advocacy of these four legislators, the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act would not be the law of the land today. The industry truly appreciates the time, hard work, and dedication each of them put into its enactment and looks forward to our continuing work with these hydropower champions to create a policy environment that fosters the nation's leading renewable electricity resource."

HREA promotes the development of small hydropower and conduit projects and aims to shorten regulatory timeframes of certain other low-impact hydropower projects, such as adding power generation to the nation's existing non-powered dams and closed-loop pumped storage. The Department of Energy has estimated that powering the nation's non-powered dams could add over 12,000 MW of new clean energy capacity.

McMorris Rodgers, who was the chief sponsor of the bill in the House of Representatives, thanked NHA for the award and addressed participants of the NHA conference this afternoon.

"It is a great honor to receive NHA's Legislator of the Year award. Hydropower affords us great opportunity for energy growth, and I look forward to continuing to support its growth," McMorris Rodgers said. "We owe it to the Pacific Northwest and to the rest of the country to expand an energy source that will not only lower energy costs for the working middle class, but create thousands of new jobs. "

DeGette, who co-authored the bill with McMorris Rodgers, was also on hand to accept the award and speak to attendees.

"Hydropower has provided the U.S. with affordable and reliable energy for over 130 years, and we are still finding ways to tap its potential," said DeGette. "I was proud that the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act passed Congress and was signed into law. We are helping smaller communities and projects across the country take advantage of hydropower's flexibility, and we are creating jobs and cutting electricity bills at the same time."

Murkowski, ranking Republican of the Senate Energy Committee, led the charge for the bill in the Senate, first introducing a version of the legislation back in 2010. She thanked NHA and the industry for the award via video address.

“It was only by working together, not only across the aisle, but across the two chambers, that we were able to enact the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act last session,” said Murkowski. “The enactment of this bipartisan bill furthers Americans’ access to the most cost-effective and reliable source of energy available to us. It is my hope that as the Senate considers our nation’s long term energy policy we can finally recognize the important contributions the renewable resource hydropower makes and continues to make to our clean energy goals.”

Wyden, who chaired the Energy Committee last year, made it a top priority of the panel, taking up consideration of the bill early in his tenure and quickly moving it to full Senate consideration.

“I’m honored the National Hydropower Association has recognized me for this award,” Wyden said. “But really, this is a reflection of the work NHA has done to show legislators what it already knew – that hydropower is a clean, baseload renewable source of power capable of cutting millions of tons of carbon dioxide emissions out of the equation. I’m going to continue working with my colleagues to build on the successes of the past year in bringing hydropower to millions of American homes.”

Bringing the industry together

The NHA Annual Conference, “Hydro: America’s Renewable for a Resilient Grid” gathers over 500 industry leaders, federal and state agency representatives and other stakeholders in the heart of the nation’s capital to chart the course forward for one of the country’s most robust industries. The policy-oriented conference agenda will focus on a range of issues facing the industry today, including new opportunities for growth, maintaining the existing hydropower fleet, financing needs, and compliance issues.

“Bringing the industry together in D.C. is vital to reaching our full potential. Conference attendees are the best positioned to tell Congress what it will take to continue the trend of growth we’ve seen in recent years,” said Church Ciocci. “It also puts our members, stakeholders, and the regulatory agencies in the same room. With a tenth of the U.S. hydropower power capacity awaiting relicensing, now is the time for all segments of the industry to engage.”

Policymakers have taken note. In addition to the congressional speakers who addressed attendees today, an impressive lineup of administration and agency leaders will take the podium over the next two days.

Tomorrow will feature United States Energy Secretary Dr. Ernest Moniz, who will provide a special keynote address about growing hydropower as part of an all-of-the-above energy strategy. A discussion with Energy Department, hydropower and other renewable energy industry leaders about the future of hydropower in the U.S. as well as opportunities to develop new hydropower from previously untapped sources will follow. Federal Energy Regulatory Commissioner Tony Clark will speak in the afternoon.

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