Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, and Chairs Neal, DeFazio, Grijalva, Pallone, Scott and Johnson:

As you work on historic reconciliation legislation to help our nation Build Back Better, we encourage you to include funding to rehabilitate, retrofit, and remove the nation’s dams as outlined in the Twenty-First Century Dams Act to increase renewable energy production and electricity storage through hydropower including pumped storage, and mitigate the impacts of climate change by improving dam safety and the health of our nation’s rivers.

Hydropower is a proven energy technology and provides the United States with more than seven percent of its electricity. As the United States moves towards a variable, distributed energy grid, protecting and expanding hydropower resources will help prevent blackouts and improve electric reliability. By including a tax credit to support generation, grid flexibility, safety, and environmental upgrades at America’s hydropower dams as envisioned in the Twenty-First Century Dams Act, Congress can help put America on the path to meet the President’s goal of 80 percent clean electricity generation by 2030.

There are nearly 6,000 “high-hazard” dams across the country with poor, unsatisfactory, or unknown safety ratings that would pose a threat to human life should they fail. The nation’s
high hazard dams have an estimated $22 billion repair backlog. To ensure our nation’s dam infrastructure can withstand the impacts of climate change induced extreme weather events, this repair backlog must be addressed. We encourage you to provide funding to rehabilitate dams as envisioned by the Twenty-First Century Dams Act to improve dam safety and resiliency.

There are also ample opportunities to remove unnecessary dams that no longer provide benefits to society, have safety issues that cannot be cost-effectively mitigated, or have significant and longstanding adverse environmental impacts that cannot be fully mitigated. Dam removals, where appropriate, can restore the natural functions of rivers and return extirpated and endangered fish species to rivers. Removing obsolete dams can also address long-standing environmental justice issues facing tribal and other disenfranchised communities by restoring natural and cultural resources. As climate change places additional stress on river ecosystems, removing outdated dams will help improve watershed resilience. We encourage you to include funding for dam removal as envisioned by the Twenty-First Century Dams Act to help the nation realize the benefits of healthy rivers.

Reconciliation is an important opportunity to make investments to address climate change and improve the resilience of our nation’s infrastructure. By including funding to rehabilitate, retrofit, and remove dams as outlined in the Twenty-First Century Dams Act, Congress can help achieve these goals while creating jobs for American workers and pursuing environmental justice priorities.

Sincerely,

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
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Emanuel Cleaver, II
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
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