



**POSITION STATEMENT
of the
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL
in support of
RENEWABLE HYDROPOWER DEVELOPMENT**

**Lincoln, Nebraska
April 25, 2025**

WHEREAS, the Western States Water Council (WSWC) is a government entity representing eighteen states, with members appointed by their respective governors; and

WHEREAS, the WSWC's mission is to ensure that the West has an adequate, secure, and sustainable supply of water of suitable quality to meet its diverse economic and environmental needs now and in the future; and

WHEREAS, the water and hydropower resources of the West have been developed through partnerships between energy and water users, and continue to be inextricably connected; and

WHEREAS, clean, efficient, inexpensive hydropower is a vital part of the energy resources needed to meet our present and future energy demands; and

WHEREAS, hydropower is an important source of renewable electricity in the United States, representing about 27% of total renewable electricity generation, with approximately 103.4 gigawatts (GW) of capacity and nearly 5.7% of total electricity generation¹; and

WHEREAS, the potential exists for further public and private development of this valuable resource, including upgrading existing generators, developing small hydro and the power potential from low-head hydro on existing man-made conduits and canals, development of tidal energy power systems, as well as hydroelectric pumped storage projects; and

WHEREAS, other than those projects requiring review by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), such development can often be undertaken with little impact on the environmental and important ecological resources, requiring minimal further environmental review; and

WHEREAS, permitting requirements may be appropriately minimized and streamlined so as to promote reasonable development while avoiding unnecessary costs; and

WHEREAS, the future development of potential hydropower resources should be appropriately undertaken in compliance with substantive and procedural state water law and interstate compacts, and consistent with the States' authority under Clean Water Act Section 401; and

WHEREAS, the rights and preference privileges of existing water and power users should be respected; and

WHEREAS, federal legislation has from time to time been introduced to further authorize and promote the wise and sustainable development of our renewable hydropower resources, also creating jobs, providing economic relief to power users, and reducing carbon emissions; and

¹ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2016/10/f33/Hydropower-Vision-Chapter-2-10212016.pdf>; p. 3, 76.

WHEREAS, hydropower is a prominent component of electricity generation in a number of western states, and important part of state renewable portfolio standards; and

WHEREAS, the potential exists to increase hydropower production by as much as 189 GW² by rehabilitating, expanding and upgrading existing facilities, powering non-powered dams, installing hydropower at existing conduits and canals, development of tidal energy power systems, as well as developing new project sites.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Western States Water Council supports federal legislative and administrative actions to authorize and implement reasonable hydropower projects and programs that enhance our electric generation capacity and promote economic development, through efficient permitting processes, while appropriately protecting environmental resources and respecting States' 401 certification authority under the Clean Water Act and States' authority over water allocation within their borders.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Western States Water Council also supports the development and implementation of appropriate energy and water conservation programs at all levels to minimize demands placed on our natural resources and ecosystems.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that past, present and future hydropower development and operational changes should recognize and ensure consistency with state law and regulatory authority and delegated authority under federal law.

Revised and Readopted
(see former Positions No. 479, 4/06/22; 433, 3/22/2019,
No. 391, 3/22/2016 and No. 351, 4/5/2013)

² Ibid, pg. 95.