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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
May 1, 2008

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The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Water and Power
House Committee on Natural Resources
1522 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Grace:

I sincerely thank you for your offer to hold a hearing on some of the issues affecting my congressional district and the rest of the West. It has been a pleasure working with you in this Congress.

As we briefly discussed on Tuesday, I strongly believe the Water and Power Subcommittee should hold an oversight hearing next month on the historical and future role of clean and renewable hydropower in meeting consumer electricity needs. At a time when Congress seems fixated on the global climate change debate and when our Nation must meet growing electricity demand, I can not think of a more productive and positive hearing.

My home region of the Pacific Northwest has been a worldwide leader in advancing conventional hydropower and other renewable energy sources. Hydropower in the region not only helped win World War II but continues to this day as an essential way-of-life for those of us in the Pacific Northwest. In fact, hydropower accounts for 70% of the electricity fuel source for Washington State. In addition, NBC Today focused on Grand Coulee Dam in my district as an Earth Day 2008 showcase of renewable electricity. I, along with many of my constituents, were very proud of NBC's coverage and realization that hydropower is indeed renewable. Finally, it is important to note that the Chicago Climate Exchange has recognized that hydropower offers carbon offsets.

Despite the conventional wisdom in the Pacific Northwest and in other places where hydropower plays a vital role in providing low-cost and clean energy, there are many policymakers and environmental groups inside the Beltway that simply do not understand the renewable nature of hydropower generated at our dams. What many also fail to realize is that hydropower is a proven backup renewable resource for wind and solar power. One need only look at our dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers to see why more wind power is being integrated into the grid.

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Since you have repeatedly indicated that this Subcommittee will focus on electricity and you voted for my amendment to classify conventional hydropower as renewable (this provision was eventually removed from the bill), I hope you agree that this hearing will highlight one of the most promising renewable technologies. A factual and thorough understanding of this renewable resource is an essential part of the energy and global climate change debate. Electricity ratepayers and the environment benefit from conventional hydropower and they have much to lose if this proven energy resource is lost or misunderstood during the coming years of debate.

I thank you once again for your willingness to hold such a hearing in June. I stand ready to work with you on this important endeavor.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy McMorris Rodgers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Water and Power Subcommittee