



April 8th, 2013

The Honorable Scott Tipton
U.S. House of Representatives
218 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Tipton:

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is a strong supporter of small, low-impact hydropower development and applauds your efforts in moving H.R. 678 forward in the 113th Congress. The opportunity of bipartisan support in the U.S House of Representatives and U.S Senate for multiple legislative efforts on this issue is extremely exciting and very timely.

Several OWRC districts members already operate hydroelectric projects of varying size and many more are exploring options for small, low-impact, in-conduit hydroelectric power. These small hydroelectric projects are placed in either an existing canal or pipeline, and have numerous benefits to the district, the water users they serve, and the environment. In-conduit hydropower provides safe and reliable renewable energy and often results in additional water instream for fish and wildlife through related piping projects. However, there are numerous regulatory hurdles that are preventing or deterring many good projects from moving forward.

OWRC supports H.R. 678, introduced by Rep. Scott Tipton and a bi-partisan group of eight colleagues. In addition, during House floor consideration of H.R 678 we support the inclusion of the following language to address the problem raised above:

The Bureau of Reclamation shall apply its categorical exclusion process under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) to small conduit hydropower development under this subsection, excluding siting of associated transmission facilities on Federal lands.

This is a similar process used by the FERC small conduit exemption. By adopting this language, both the FERC process and the Bureau of Reclamation Lease of Power Privilege process would have the similar NEPA requirement which is a Categorical Exclusion. That would help clarify any concerns raised with regard to NEPA requirements in these processes. Small, low-impact hydropower should be plug and play type projects with simple applications that allow for more immediate realization of the numerous benefits they provide.

OWRC is a nonprofit trade association representing agricultural water suppliers in Oregon, primarily irrigation districts, as well as other special districts and local governments that deliver irrigation water. OWRC members operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canal, pipelines, and hydropower production, delivering water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. About half of our members have contracts with or are in Bureau of Reclamation projects.

Thank you for your continued efforts in advancing H.R. 678 and creating opportunities for small, low-impact hydropower projects at Bureau of Reclamation facilities.

Sincerely,

April Snell, OWRC Executive Director