



Hydropower -- It's a 'green' resource

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Northwest ratepayers got a boost recently when Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., convinced the House Natural Resources Committee to agree that hydropower is a renewable energy resource.

It was an important vote for ratepayers in general and for the many interests dependent upon the four Lower Snake River dams in particular.

Some environmental groups are passionately in favor of breaching those dams. It will be more difficult when they -- and perhaps the federal courts -- have to factor in that dams are even "greener" than windmills and solar panels.

"Hydropower is a clean, reliable and affordable renewable energy source that serves as a key component in our national environmental and energy policy objectives," McMorris Rodgers said. "It's about time Congress recognized that hydropower is renewable and emissions-free."

She added: "At a time when there are growing concerns about the impacts of climate change, we need to find energy sources that will help curb greenhouse gas emissions without stifling our economy."

"Hydropower does just that, and our dams in the Pacific Northwest produce one of the cleanest forms of electricity generation. I'm glad my colleagues recognized on a bipartisan basis that hydropower is a renewable resource similar to wind and solar."

McMorris Rodgers said it would take three nuclear, six coal-fired or 14 gas-fired power plants to provide the peaking capacity of the four Snake River dams.

Her amendment recognizing hydropower as a renewable energy resource passed by a bipartisan vote of 44-0.

If that's any indication of the sense of the Congress (and we think it is), adverse rulings by federal judges could prove to be futile gestures in the long run.