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News Media Contact

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FERC, Colorado Sign Agreement on Small Hydropower Development

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the State of Colorado have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to simplify procedures authorizing the development of small-scale hydropower projects in Colorado.

FERC has seen rising interest among entities seeking to develop small, low-impact hydropower projects, and federal surveys have identified several hundred potential small hydropower projects of smaller than 5 megawatts (MW) in Colorado with a combined capacity of more than 1,400 MW. These projects have the potential to make a significant contribution to Colorado's renewable energy mix, to help meet Colorado's new Renewable Energy Standard and to create related business opportunities while reducing greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

"I want to thank Governor Ritter, his staff and FERC staff for their tireless efforts in making this agreement a reality," FERC Chairman Jon Wellinghoff said. "Small hydropower has an important role to play in the future of renewable energy in this country and I am pleased that Colorado is committed to this cause."

"I commend Colorado's leadership for recognizing the great potential for hydrokinetic resources in their state," Commissioner Philip Moeller said. "This clean and renewable source of electricity can provide a valuable contribution to powering the state's future."

"Colorado's leadership in spearheading the pilot program is an important step to encourage the development of small hydro facilities," Commissioner Cheryl LaFleur said. "There are opportunities in many regions of the country to develop small hydro facilities that help meet renewable energy goals and contribute to economic development."

Under the MOU, FERC and Colorado agree to the following:

- Colorado will develop a pilot program to test options for simplifying and streamlining procedures for authorizing conduit exemptions and small 5MW or less exemption projects while ensuring environmental safeguards;
- Colorado and FERC will identify a single point of contact for implementation of the pilot program;
- Both parties will hold quarterly teleconferences to discuss the development and implementation of the pilot program;
- Both parties will share and make publicly available all relevant economic, environmental, and technical data.
- FERC will waive certain consultation requirements when all relevant resources agencies agree to do so.

FERC has signed MOUs with four other states recently on the development of hydrokinetic projects: California, Washington, Maine, and Oregon. Related to today's announcement, the Commission soon will unveil a new web page devoted to small hydropower licensing at www.ferc.gov.

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