

S 1236

Hydropower Improvement Act of 2015

Congress: 114 (2015–2017, Ended)

Chamber: Senate

Policy Area: Energy

Introduced: May 6, 2015

Current Status: Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Hearings held. Hearings printed: S.Hrg. 114-118.

Latest Action: Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Hearings held. Hearings printed: S.Hrg. 114-118. (May 19, 2015)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1236>

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Murkowski, Lisa [R-AK]

Party: Republican • **State:** AK • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors (1 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Risch, James E. [R-ID]	R · ID		May 12, 2015

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Energy and Natural Resources Committee	Senate	Hearings By (full committee)	May 19, 2015

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Energy

Related Bills

No related bills are listed.

Hydropower Improvement Act of 2015

This bill declares that hydropower is a renewable resource for purposes of all federal programs and is an essential source of energy in the United States.

The Federal Power Act is amended to limit the conditions placed on construction licenses issued for dams, conduits and reservoirs within any federal to those that: (1) pertain to the reservation land on which project works are located; and (2) have a clear and direct nexus to the presence or operations of the project being licensed, as determined by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Preliminary permits issued to maintain priority of application for a license may be extended from three years to four years.

FERC may: (1) extend the period of a preliminary permit for up to four additional years beyond the initial four years, and (2) grant the permittee an additional permit if extraordinary circumstances warrant that action.

When determining the term of a license, FERC must consider project-related investments by the licensee over the term of the existing license that resulted in new development, construction, capacity, efficiency improvements, or environmental measures, but which did not result in FERC extension of the license term.

FERC shall also determine alternative prescriptions for a fishway license instead of the Department of the Interior.

FERC shall require a licensee to construct, maintain, and operate fishways only if the fishways are necessary to mitigate effects of a project upon fish populations, have a clear and direct nexus to the presence or operations of the project being licensed, and are submitted in accordance with a specified schedule.

FERC shall in addition: (1) investigate best practices in performing licensing studies, including methodologies and the design of studies to assess the full range of any environmental impacts of a project; (2) compile a comprehensive collection of studies and data accessible to the public that could be used to inform license proceedings; and (3) act as the lead agency coordinating all applicable federal authorizations.

FERC may, upon request, designate staff to hold informal meetings to discuss technical or procedural matters relating to any ongoing license proceeding.

The bill revises requirements regarding the entitlement of a license applicant, including any party to the proceeding, to a determination on the record, after opportunity for a trial-type hearing, concerning disputed issues of material fact with respect to an applicable covered measure.

In implementing the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act of 2013, FERC must consider a closed loop pumped storage project to include one: (1) in which the upper and lower reservoirs do not impound or directly withdraw water from a navigable stream, and (2) that is not continuously connected to a naturally flowing water feature.

Actions Timeline

- **May 19, 2015:** Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Hearings held. Hearings printed: S.Hrg. 114-118.
- **May 6, 2015:** Introduced in Senate
- **May 6, 2015:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.