



RIVERS CONNECT US®



Putting water, wildlife,  
and people back in rivers.



August 19, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
2468 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Support for the Rehabilitation, Retrofit, and Removal (“3Rs”) of the Nation’s 90,000 Dams in the Budget Reconciliation Package**

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned organizations write to urge inclusion of critical provisions in the upcoming Budget Reconciliation process to accelerate the rehabilitation, retrofit, and removal (the “3Rs”) of our nation’s more than 90,000 dams.

A diverse cross-section of dam safety groups, river conservation organizations, and hydropower industry has come together in a historically unprecedented manner to advance public safety from deficient dams, the clean energy and electricity storage benefits of hydropower, and the environmental, safety, and economic benefits of healthy rivers.

Together the groups are supporting inclusion in Budget Reconciliation of the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Dam Act.” This bipartisan, bicameral legislation (H.R. 4375 and its Senate companion bills, S.2356 and S.2306) would provide \$26 billion to improve the nation’s dams: \$21 billion in direct spending and \$4.7 billion in tax support for the existing hydropower fleet.

Action in the Budget Reconciliation process is critical to adjust existing laws to achieve the spending and revenues necessary to address the 3Rs in light of climate change.

- **Rehabilitation** of the more than 1,300 most critically deficient, non-federally regulated dams nationwide, and expanding state programs to address thousands of other high- and significant-hazard potential dams, is vitally important as more extreme weather events deepen dam safety challenges. The American Society of Civil Engineers 2021 Report Card for the Nation's Infrastructure estimated that over the next ten years, the nation would need to spend \$93.6 billion to modernize and repair all of our nation's dams, but unfortunately the U.S. is only on track to spend about \$12.5 billion in that same time frame.
- **Retrofits** of the existing hydropower fleet by leveraging tax credits to incentivize critically needed private sector investment in dam safety, environmental improvements, and grid resiliency, would help improve performance of the existing fleet of renewable hydropower and pumped storage. Over 300 existing hydropower facilities, representing roughly 30% of the non-federal fleet and 13 GWs of generation capacity, are up for relicensing by 2030.
- **Removal** of as many as 1,000 dams determined by their owners to no longer be necessary would open 10,000 miles of free-flowing rivers, provide meaningful climate resilience and habitat connectivity for native river fish and other species, help more segments of rivers achieve water quality standards, and provide economically valuable recreational opportunities including boating and fishing.

Inclusion of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dam Act in Budget Reconciliation would help support or create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs, improve public safety by rehabilitating or removing some of the nation's most hazardous dams, restore many miles of rivers enhancing their climate resilience, and increase the grid resilience benefits and power generating capacity of America's existing dams.

We support inclusion of these important provisions in Budget Reconciliation and look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this legislation. For further information, please contact Zolaikha Strong, National Hydropower Association ([zstrong@hydro.org](mailto:zstrong@hydro.org), 202/750-8403), Ted Illston, American Rivers ([tillston@americanrivers.org](mailto:tillston@americanrivers.org), 202/243-7077), or Mark Ogden, Association of State Dam Safety Officials ([mogden@damsafety.org](mailto:mogden@damsafety.org), 859-333-3650).

Sincerely,

American Rivers  
American Society of Civil Engineers  
Association of State Dam Safety Officials  
The Hydropower Foundation  
Hydropower Reform Coalition

Low Impact Hydropower Institute  
National Hydropower Association  
Trout Unlimited