



Climate change — a Northwest perspective

Editor's Note:

Rep. Doc Hastings, (R), central Washington State, spoke at the Northwest Hydroelectric Association Conference Feb. 20, 2008. The following are remarks excerpted to fit space here.

The issue of climate change seems to be in the news almost every day. It's an issue that scientists are busy studying, politicians are busy talking about and special interest groups are busy trying to capitalize on. Frankly, it's an issue our nation should be having a full dialogue about. But it must be done in an intellectually honest way. It must be based on scientific proof, not scare tactics. It must take into account reality and the limitations of Americans, our economy and, indeed, the human race.

Science has proven that the earth is warming – that much is clear. Has the earth gone through previous natural cycles of warming and cooling? Absolutely. Have humans contributed to current warming? A skeptical yes – the jury is still out as to what degree. Can humans truly be blamed for any and all change in the climate? Definitely not.

Should the Northwest, and invariably the entire US economy, be held accountable for the climate swings? This is where I must part company with those who claim that the situation is so dire that we can't consider, or

even question, the implications of the solutions that are proposed.

When it comes to my own views on climate change, I am ready to engage in the debate on what our country should do because the real answers to the challenges it's said the planet faces and ignores at its own peril, are actually policies I've long supported:

- Clean, renewable, non-polluting hydropower dams.
- Nuclear power to meet our growing energy needs.
- Water storage for irrigation and municipal needs.
- Using agriculture and wood waste products to generate energy,
- Encouraging our world-class scientists to seek out new forms of energy and technologies to improve efficiency.
- Understanding the harmful effects on energy production of higher taxes, greater government regulations and government meddling in the marketplace.
- Respect for the proven ability of free markets and personal freedom to foster innovation and to improve our quality of life.

To me, these are not only the best paths to take in the name of climate change, but they are just plain the right paths and policies in general.

I believe we can agree that work must be done to move towards a cheaper, cleaner, more efficient and diverse energy system and make con-

tributions to a cleaner environment for our children and grandchildren.

Our region needs more people at the table who understand that annual hydropower output is equivalent to the energy produced from 200 million barrels of oil – that hydropower is more efficient than any other form of electricity generation and that hydropower offsets more carbon emissions than all other renewable energy sources combined.

By any measure, hydropower is a renewable energy source and should officially be recognized as such by any legal or regulatory standard established by the federal or state governments.

While it's astonishing that hydropower as a renewable energy source is even a matter of debate, it is even more astonishing that some demand the removal of the four Snake River dams in the name of climate change.

This is pure politics and hypocrisy at its worst.

Instead of efforts to remove dams and limit their value as renewable energy sources, our region should seek ways to maximize their benefit. Why not pursue incentives for increased or more efficient hydropower generation?

There are federal dams with empty turbine bays, such as four at John Day, three at Dworshak and three at Libby Dam. Could these available resources be fulfilled? If not now, could they

be in the future?

Of the turbines that are currently in Northwest dams and generating power, most were installed in the 1940s, 50s and 60s – obviously with updates and rehab occurring since. Yet we know there is new turbine technology that is more efficient and can produce more power with the same amount of water.

Should turbine replacement be an option that is pursued?

Right now, the hydrosystem is under assault and losing generation capacity, but in addition to rebuffing these attacks we should be examining whether we can achieve more by utilizing the resources we already have on hand.

I could go on and on about the merits of hydropower and the political hypocrisy of the climate change activists who push dam removal and refuse to recognize hydro as a clean, renewable energy source just like wind and solar power. But I'll conclude with one last observation.

If capturing the energy of the wind blowing and the sun shining is clean, natural and renewable, then so is water running downhill.



Rep. Hastings