

Excerpt From Commissioner Michael Connor-NCPA Speech 4-23-12

Michael Connor: President Obama has made it clear that our nation needs an "All of the Above" energy strategy. One that pursues, both increasing energy production using domestic resources and one that requires us to use energy more efficiently.

That agenda in itself has, obviously, been part of what the President's been focused on during his entire term in office. Particularly, since he weighed out the agenda, a blueprint for a sustainable America moving forward. And energy is one of the foundational elements of that strategy.

Specifically, he has put a goal out there, for us federal agencies to try and meet, that we achieve an 80 percent of electricity in this country from a diverse set of clean energy sources by 2035. The good news is, and quite frankly, there was a dialogue about this early on within the administration as what is the role of hydropower in that overall initiative.

Hydropower is a fundamental part of that view; that it's a clean energy source, it's incorporated specifically when the President put out that goal. It did include the hydropower resource that, both, Reclamation, the Corps of Engineers that were responsible for it, and certainly that were trying developing overall throughout the administration including DOE.

Hydropower is an important part of Department of the Interior's aggressive efforts and we have an array of initiatives on energy. We are the one stop shopping for the "All of the Above" strategies that the President has put forth. We have conventional resources that we permit on public lands and offshore energy resources. There's quite a debate about that these days.

But, we feel very strongly that the facts speak for themselves and that the onshore and the offshore conventional resources, oil and gas, are at their highest level of production than they've been in quite a while. For that the Department, and Secretary Salazar in particular, are very proud of the efforts that we're making in that area.

Also, the Secretary has been very, very focused on renewable energy resources, non-hydro renewable energy resources. We know, hydropower is, by far and away the most substantial renewable energy resource produced in this country right now. But there are aggressive efforts underway in developing and permitting, bringing online, other non-hydro renewable resources.

The department has a high priority goal overall of permitting, facilitating, bringing online, during the first three years and through this coming year, 9,000 megawatts of renewable energy resources on public lands. That's a pretty astounding number quite frankly.

Every time I turn around, the Secretary is at another groundbreaking or event announcing a new permit or moving forward on a significant solar or even wind project that's underway. Just to give you a context, 9,000 megawatts, overall, Reclamation is the second largest producer of hydropower in the country. We've got about 15,000 megawatts of capacity in our portfolio, 58 power plants. 15,000 megawatts has taken us over 100 years... Well, maybe not quite 100 years, since the hydropower was an afterthought with respect to water development.

But that gives you a sense of what we're trying to do in a short amount of time, 9,000 megawatts versus our whole portfolio, which is 15,000 megawatts. But, at the same time, while we're no longer developing those large, large facilities, the Grand Coulees at 6.6 gigawatts, and Hoover Dam at 2,000 megawatts. We are still having a very aggressive agenda to try and bring on more hydropower. It's part of that "All of the Above" strategy.