

MINUTES  
JOINT MEETING

**HOUSE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, March 02, 2022

**TIME:** 1:30 or Upon Adjournment

**PLACE:** Room WW02

**MEMBERS:** Chairman Ehardt, Vice Chairman Wisniewski, Representatives Vander Woude, Horman, Scott, Amador, Armstrong, Furniss, Hartgen, Lickley, Young, Adams, Yamamoto, Chew, Necochea, Nash

Chairman Kauffman, Vice Chairman Andrus, Representatives Boyle, Kerby, Giddings, Marshall, Nichols, Hanks, Cannon, Moon, McCann, Toone, Ruchti, Mathias (Woodings)

**ABSENT/  
EXCUSED:** Rep. Horman, Scott, Amador, Young, Adams, Necochea, Nash

**GUESTS:** The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of the session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

**Chairman Ehardt** called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

**Douglas R. Jones**, Government Affairs for Idaho Water Engineering, presented information on the Cat Creek Energy Project. Cat Creek will create and store enough clean electricity to power 300,000 homes. It will be the state's largest electrical generator. The recycling hydro resource can be ready in seconds, available at full power just from its storage for up to 121 hours, and can restart the Western grid, if needed.

One value of the energy infrastructure is its water storage. The pumps in Anderson Ranch Reservoir will carry early runoff, which will otherwise be lost to the valley, to the new upper reservoir for later use by municipalities and irrigation districts, adding up to 80,000-acre feet of water storage for other uses. It is a privately financed project, which will create jobs and spur economic investments in Idaho, while paying fees and taxes to its public partners during its hundred-year lifecycle. It is estimated to create over \$1 billion in American clean energy and construction jobs during this phase. The project is anticipated to be online by late 2026 or early 2027.

**Mr. Jones** explained that a unique point in this project is solar panels that will be floating on the surface of the reservoir. This will increase power production, reduce evaporation off the reservoir and reduce heating to help aquatic life in the reservoir.

In answer to committee questions, **Mr. Jones** stated that agreements are already in place for water use with a few municipalities and irrigation companies. There is still some water available, but not a lot. He explained that water will be pumped into the reservoir when there is an energy surplus, and water will be brought down when there is a need for hydro power. He also mentioned that the facility is EMP hardened.

**Chairman Ehardt** turned the gavel over to **Chairman Kauffman**.

To answer committee inquiries, **Mr. Jones** explained in 2019, the Bureau of Reclamation granted a Preliminary Lease of Power Privilege giving exclusive rights to prove the project's viability and compatibility with other Reclamation purposes. He clarified water will only be pumped into the system during the heaviest water runoff, and it will not infringe on other water rights. He pointed out that although water will be sold outside of Idaho during shortages, there will be trading for extra power during peak energy supplies. He acknowledged that power will sometimes be going to other Western States. This project includes solar and wind power to help offset energy needs. Because the reservoir will be lined, it will be able to hold water for years when there is not excess water to pump into the system. He assured the committees that home power bills will not be changed because of this project.

**ADJOURN:**

There being no further business to come before the joint committees, the House Environment, Energy and Technology Committee was excused at 2:24 pm.

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Representative Ehardt  
Chair

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Maggie Price  
Secretary