

Opening Statement
The Honorable Bob Inglis (R-SC), Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy & Environment
Marine and Hydrokinetic Energy Technology: Finding the Path to Commercialization

December 3, 2009

Good morning and thank you for holding this hearing, Mr. Chairman.

This is a timely hearing, Mr. Chairman. This year, we have held hearings on solar, wind, and biomass energy sources. Hydropower contributes more renewable energy to the U.S. electrical grid than all of these other renewable sources, combined. Depending on rainfall and water storage, conventional hydropower accounts for 6-9% of the total U.S. electricity supply. Today we have the opportunity to explore ways to increase the contribution from hydropower through unconventional water sources.

Marine based hydropower represents a significant source of unused energy. South Carolina alone has a coastline of nearly 200 miles and considerable tidal resources around the Sea Islands. Technologies that can take advantage of the waves, currents, temperature differences, and tides can turn our abundant coastal and tidal zones into energy generators. As we'll hear from our witnesses, these technologies will face a number of challenges related to environmental conditions and competition with recreational and commercial activities. I am confident that we can manage all of these challenges to utilize this large potential energy source.

Microhydro represents a great opportunity for distributed electricity generation in streams and rivers, irrigation canals, and other bodies of water previously not considered powerful enough for power generation. Hydropower installations of 1 megawatt or less can be deployed across the country easing the burden on our electrical grid and increasing the security of electricity users across the country.

I am looking forward to hearing from our witnesses today on the current state of these technologies, what we need to move forward, and what role the government should play in removing barriers to development and installation. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.