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The Department of Energy (DOE) released a report in early May concluding that the U.S. has the potential to almost double its current hydropower generation capacity. The assessment details how the U.S. can diversify its energy supply by generating up to 65 additional gigawatts of hydropower through harnessing the potential of 3 million rivers and streams in all 50 states.

Hydropower currently provides the largest source of renewable energy in the U.S., contributing 7 percent of the total electricity generated.

DOE emphasized responsible development in its report. Although the report does not examine the economic feasibility or financial considerations associated with new hydropower generation sites, it identifies “high-energy intensity stream-reaches and [classifies] new potential areas for hydropower development using a range of technical, socio-economic, and environmental characteristics.”

The new hydropower facilities suggested in the report would be smaller operations that would use low-impact designs and consider local wildlife habitats, protected lands, and fishing access areas.

Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz praised the report’s conclusions, saying “The United States has tremendous untapped clean energy resources and responsible development will help pave the way to a cleaner, more sustainable and diverse energy portfolio.”

Sources: Department of Energy, E&E News
