North American Megadam Resistance Alliance

Protecting rivers and their communities by resisting megadams and their transmission corridors

www.northeastmegadamresistance.org

December 2020 Newsletter
We're Making Progress

A Message from NAMRA Coordinator, Meg Sheehan

Through the tumult of the last year, the North American Megadam Resistance Alliance (NAMRA) has steadfastly pursued its mission of protecting rivers and their communities by actively opposing megadams and their transmission corridors. We’ve reached hundreds of thousands of people through social media posts, newsletters, virtual meetings, and conferences. Our support base has expanded substantially and NAMRA staff and affiliates have been quoted in leading publications with international reach. As an organizing catalyst, NAMRA has brought together community groups opposing Canadian megadams from Site C in British Columbia, Keeyask in Manitoba, and from Muskrat Falls and Gull Island in Labrador.

We’ve hosted or joined nearly a dozen webinars, with topics that include megadam financing and the history of Indigenous resistance against Canadian hydropower on the 30th Anniversary of the Odeyak, Cree, and Inuit joining U.S. allies to resist Hydro-Quebec’s plans for more dams in the James Bay Region. In our most recent webinar with Sierra Club Maine, The Deals Made, The Money Involved, and Lack of Transparency in Pursuit of Big Hydro, we addressed the negative impacts of importing Canadian hydropower on New England energy consumers and how exporting U.S. energy dollars to Canadian hydropower monopolies harms local economies. As the alternative to Canadian hydropower, our experts explained how local renewable energy alternatives will create more jobs for U.S. workers.

A seat at the table for Indigenous and Aboriginal communities
NAMRA also held fast to our commitment to demand a seat at the table for Indigenous, Aboriginal, and historically-marginalized communities seeking to protect their communities, lands, and waters from exploitation by the Canadian hydropower industry. We lifted many voices speaking truth to power, including facilitating a four-state U.S. speaking tour with Indigenous community members and allies in late 2019. We also forged a key relationship with Wa Ni Ska Tan, an Indigenous-led alliance of hydro-impacted communities based at the University of Manitoba in Canada, including presenting a workshop at the Wa Ni Ska Tan 2019 conference on our strategy for building alliances to work across borders to oppose Canadian hydropower.

We hosted a virtual press conference to address the annual Northeastern U.S. governors and Eastern Canadian premiers conference where leaders discuss international trade and energy policy including hydropower exports from Eastern Canada. At the press conference, we brought to light the fact that again the governors and premiers refused to address the other side of the Canadian hydropower story—cultural genocide, and environmental, economic, and social damage.

NAMRA has earned international recognition as a leader in the grassroots, community-based movement that is exposing hydropower’s devastating effects on people and the environment. In November, we participated in the COP26 Coalition’s “From the Ground Up” (see story below) a virtual conference with world-recognized leaders in the movement against dams in Brazil.

In addition, we continue digging into the nitty-gritty details of U.S. energy policy and have shown up time and again to send politicians, regulators, and policymakers the message that Canadian hydropower is dirty energy and must be excluded from climate plans.

**Rubutting false claims about the need for new megadams**
In March, we released our report rebutting once and for all Hydro-Quebec and the Quebec government’s claim that there is “surplus” hydropower available for export to the U.S., as well as the equally false claim that the Champlain Hudson Power Express (CHPE) and Central Maine Power (CMP) transmission corridors will not create a need for new dams to be built. In a report on CHPE and NECEC, Northbridge Energy Partners concluded that Hydro-Quebec could not meet the demand for those projects solely from existing generating facilities.

"The surplus generating capacity cited by HQ and politicians as being capable of supporting these exports are highly variable and insufficient," the report states. "Either they (HQ) will have to back down existing export volumes or build new hydro facilities—or resort to a combination of both." You can read the entire report by clicking here.

Since then, Hydro-Quebec officials admitted under oath that they’ve built four new megadams since 2009 in order to supply exports to the U.S. via the new transmission corridors, linking environmental racism and destruction of rivers and forests to U.S. consumers who are deceptively being told they'll be getting “clean/green” energy.

Finally, NAMRA took the Canadian Government and Hydro-Quebec to task at this past summer’s U.S. International Trade Commission hearing on its investigation into hydropower imports to Massachusetts. Our testimony exposed the fraudulent greenwashing and environmental racism of megadam-generated electricity in briefs and in-person testimony (for more on this, click here). The ITC report is due in January 2021.

**New Challenges on the Horizon**

Many challenges lie ahead as the Canadian government and many U.S. politicians deny the science, the facts, and first-hand testimonials showing that large-scale hydropower is neither clean nor green. Instead, they are pushing for more megadams and more transmission corridors to carry Canadian hydropower to the U.S. Stopping these dams and corridors and creating a true clean economy won't be easy. We need your help! Please join our team, donate, and follow us on social media.

—Meg Sheehan
NAMRA Participates in International Climate Gathering

Panel addresses greenwashing of hydroelectric dams.

On November 12-16, NAMRA participated in the international online event, *From the Ground Up; Gathering for Climate Justice* organized by the COP26 Coalition, a civil society alliance organizing for climate justice around the 26th meeting of the United Nations Climate Change Conference. The event was originally planned to take place in Glasgow, Scotland but was moved online because of the pandemic (the COP26 conference was rescheduled for November 2021). NAMRA was a co-presenter on the panel False Solutions 101: Hydropower. To listen to the recording click here.

On the panel, NAMRA's Indigenous allies Rita Monias and Tommy Monias from Pimicikamak in Manitoba, Canada joined Alessandra Korap Munduruku, a human rights defender and leader of the Munduruku people of the Tapajós River (also head of the Munduruku warrior women and advisor of the Pariri Association), and Marta Tipuici Manoki, a youth leader from the Manoki people in Brazil's Juruena Basin. NAMRA coordinator Meg Sheehan was also a presenter on the panel.

“We were honored to participate in this event bringing together frontline Indigenous community members resisting dams in Brazil and Canada,” Sheehan said. "It showed the strength of our network and brought forward the voices of front-line communities who bear the cost of hydropower that perpetuates environmental racism."

Thank You!
We extend our thanks to Earthrise Law Center attorney Kevin Cassidy and his team at Lewis and Clark Law School for filing two lawsuits in connection with the federal permitting of the Central Maine Power transmission corridor to import Hydro-Quebec’s hydroelectricity to Boston. Representing local groups, Earthrise filed lawsuits under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) over failure to disclose public records about the permitting process and under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) seeking to require an Environmental Impact Statement.

In New York, NAMRA joined the Innu Nation of Labrador and the Center for Biological Diversity in filing a Notice of Violations against the federal government for failing to comply with the Endangered Species Act and NEPA in permitting the Champlain Hudson Power Express (CHPE) transmission corridor for exports to New York. The 333 mile corridor is proposed to be buried under Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. The Notice of Violations explains how the corridor will harm endangered sturgeon habitat and how the federal government failed to study the environmental and climate justice impacts of Hydro-Quebec’s new dams and electricity generation.

Finally, we’d like to thank all the great volunteers who showed up in force on a cold and windy Election Day in Maine to collect a whopping 23,000 signatures for a petition to have a public referendum on the CMP transmission corridor project. This was a truly amazing feat considering organizers had only three days notice to get petitions printed, sorted, and distributed to nearly 200 volunteers at 120 polling places.

*Help keep up the momentum to stop CMP’s transmission corridor!*

If you’d like to help collect signatures for the petition (even just from friends and family), email stopnecec@gmail.com. If you haven’t yet signed the petition, click here to find a location near you.
Problems Persist at Brittish Columbia's Site C Megadam

A number of leading Canadians call for a halt to construction at the site.

The Site C megadam in British Columbia is literally sinking. That should come as no surprise as it was built on shale! Site C, on British Columbia's Peace River, is currently under construction. It's already cost $11 billion dollars and is only 50 percent completed. In October, The Narwhal reported that two top Brittish Columbia civil servants, including the senior bureaucrat who prepares Site C dam documents, knew that the project faced serious geotechnical problems.

Recently, more than a dozen First Nation leaders, former Canadian cabinet officials, scientists, and business leaders called on the provincial government to stop construction on the Site C dam project until geotechnical and other issues are resolved.

First Nations peoples, as well as local landowners and environmentalists have long opposed the Site C project due to its planned flooding of agricultural land, damage to the local environment, spiraling costs, and the availability of less impactful alternatives.

Other Canadian Megadam Problems

The Keeyask dam in Manitoba is also in conflict with local First Nations over work site conditions, water pollution, and flooding. Most recently there was a worker safety dispute following a COVID-19 outbreak.
And Bloomberg reported that Nalcor Energy had 45,000 liters of oil spilled at the Churchill Falls hydroelectric plant switchyard in Labrador.

Nalcor said the oil spilled from a transformer on October 29 after a mechanical failure and a fire. The company added that some of the estimated 45,000 liters spilled would have burned off in the fire, but it was not possible to know exactly how much.

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**Atlantic Loop Motivated by Profits**

*Another plan that diverts us from a true clean energy future.*

Have you heard of the Atlantic Loop? It's a proposal that came out of the Canadian government’s Throne Speech in September that would provide a huge amount of electricity for a regional loop that could include both eastern Canada and parts of the U.S. Once examined closely, however, it becomes clear that the Atlantic Loop is motivated more by the generation of possible new sources of profit and income for the areas involved than from any commitment to a clean energy future.

The Atlantic Loop would cause further destruction to the environment of Canada. Like the proposed CMP corridor that would transmit hydropower from Canada to Massachusetts, via Maine, this hydro-power plan is not what we need for a clean energy future. But it's more profitable to build massive hydropower generation systems that negatively impact the natural landscape than to do what's really needed— shift gears and harness the energy already provided by nature in abundance — solar power, wind power, tidal power, and more.
NAMRA Participates in 51st National Day of Mourning

Speakers send a strong message about the impact of megadams.

On November 26, NAMRA speakers from hydro-impacted communities participated, through a pre-recorded video, in the 51st National Day of Mourning in Plymouth, MA. Their message was clear and forceful—megadams cause cultural genocide and major environmental damage. This is the fourth year that NAMRA has supported its indigenous allies by participating in the event.

The National Day of Mourning is an annual event organized by the United American Indians of New England. It serves as a reminder of the genocide of millions of Native people, the theft of Native lands, and the relentless assault on Native culture. All of the speakers are from Indigenous communities. This year’s event brought together Indigenous community members from around the world fighting for their sovereignty against colonialism and extractive industries such as hydropower and tar sands. The Day of Mourning is a day of remembrance and spiritual connection as well as a protest of the racism and oppression which Native Americans continue to experience.
First Nations Coalition Opposes CMP Transmission Corridor

Comments filed with the U.S. Department of Energy.

The First Nations of Pessamit (Innu), Wemotaci (Atikamekw), Pikogan, Lac Simon and Kitcisakik (Anishnabeg) recently announced opposition to Hydro-Quebec's proposed transmission corridor from Quebec (Appalaches-Maine) to the Maine border, and the New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC) from Maine to Massachusetts. The First Nations filed comments to the U.S. Department of Energy on the Presidential Permit needed by NECEC to transmit electricity across the U.S.-Canadian border.

The First Nations described the history of harm to their communities and ancestral lands from hydropower development. Their opposition, and the resulting environmental racism associated with the generation of this electricity on their territories and export to the U.S. as “clean energy” is summed up by the Anishnobe-Atikemekw-Innu Coalition on the website, quebechydroclash.com.

Innu Nation of Labrador sues Hydro-Quebec

In October the Innu Nation of Labrador sued Hydro-Quebec for $4 billion for damage to their ancestral lands, waters, and communities caused by the Upper Churchill dam in Labrador. This dam supplies one-sixth of the electricity Hydro-Quebec delivers to the U.S. and would be included in the electricity supply for CMP and CHPE (for more information visit 50yearspastdue.ca).

The legal challenges by the First Nations of Quebec and the Innu of Labrador to Hydro-Quebec create significant regulatory uncertainty for CMP and CHPE. Hydro-Quebec is trying to sell stolen electricity, according to the legal challenges—taking these communities' property without compensation.

NAMRA stands in solidarity with these First Nation communities. Profits from CMP and CHPE should go first to the Indigenous people on whose land the dams are located, not to the private arbitrage schemes of the companies who seek to exploit these communities for their investors.

TAKE ACTION

NAMRA is a volunteer-led organization. We rely on your support. Please consider donating to our important work.

And please sign and share NAMRA’s petition calling on leaders throughout the Northeast U.S. to reject dirty Canadian hydropower.
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