

State News for NSPE Members

Group Seeking to Build Columbia Dam Pursues Federal Funds for Study

A group pushing to resurrect decades-old plans to build a dam on the Duck River in Columbia is working with US Rep. Andy Ogles to secure congressional funding to fast-track a feasibility study.

Columbia Dam Now's goal is evident in their name: they want the federal government to fund the reconstruction of the Columbia Dam (which was halted in the 1980s and eventually dismantled in 1990s) as soon as possible.

A spokesperson for Ogles confirmed he is “actively working” with US Rep. Chuck Fleischmann — a fellow Tennessee Republican and chairman of energy and water appropriations — and the House Appropriations Committee to “explore what steps can be taken at a federal level to allow for a dam to be built along the Duck River.”

A feasibility study would be the first step of that process. The spokesperson did not address questions about the amount of funding being sought or a decision timeline.

Proponents position the dam as the only way to secure a source of affordable drinking water for fast-growing southern Middle Tennessee and tout the economic development potential of creating a lake in Columbia. Opponents aren't buying it.

[Read more in the Tennessee Lookout.](#)

EM Assistance Keeps Energy Project on Track in Oak Ridge

In a unique collaboration, the Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management (OREM) and contractor UCOR recently assisted one of the largest companies locating at the East Tennessee Technology Park (ETTP), helping keep a key energy project on track, the [US Department of Energy reports](#).

OREM completed a two-decade cleanup effort at ETTP last year that removed 500 buildings and excavated more than 50,000 dump truck loads of soil. This work cleared away old, contaminated infrastructure and environmental risks, providing the community with large amounts of reusable land to attract new economic opportunities.

One such opportunity came when Kairos Power announced a \$100 million investment on the former US Department of Energy-owned land at ETTP in 2021. The company purchased a 185-acre parcel that previously housed the massive K-31 and K-33 uranium enrichment buildings demolished as part of the cleanup. While OREM removed the buildings and slabs, some subsurface electrical infrastructure was left in place. [Read more.](#)

New Coal Mining Permit Approved in Tennessee

The Department of the Interior has given the green light to Hurricane Creek Mining, LLC to mine coal on Bryson Mountain in Claiborne County, Tennessee, [the US Department of the Interior reports](#). This project will produce up to 1.8 million tons of coal over the next 10 years, helping to strengthen America's energy independence and create local jobs. The coal from this mine will support important industries like steelmaking and power generation.

The permit was approved through expedited environmental review under newly established procedures designed to speed up reviews of energy projects in response to the national energy emergency declared by President Trump earlier this year. This approval is a key step in the government's plan to support reliable coal production and grow the nation's energy resources and in alignment with Executive Order 14261, "Reinvigorating America's Beautiful Clean Coal Industry." This mine approval complements the recently passed One Big Beautiful Bill Act's support for the coal industry in the United States, including by reducing royalty rates for mining federal coal and opening millions of acres for federal coal leasing. [Read more.](#)

Stay up to date on legislative issues through the [NSPE Advocacy Center](#).

NSPE Garners Victory for Tomorrow's Workforce

On July 4, 2025, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act was signed into law as part of the larger One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The new law expands 529 education savings plans to cover expenses related to licensure, certification, and other postsecondary credentials.

As written, the legislation covers programs accredited by organizations such as the National Commission on Certifying Agencies (NCCA) or the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), as well as tuition, required materials, and testing fees. These changes will provide more flexible financial tools to support individuals working toward credentials in highly technical fields, including engineering, where continued education and professional development are essential.

This marks a major win for NSPE and the many members who engaged over the years to make it happen. Implementation guidance is expected in the coming months, and NSPE will share updates as federal agencies roll out the new provisions. [Read more.](#)

NSPE Backs Increased Mobility Through International Licensure Agreements

NSPE recently [issued a position statement](#) to express support for and encourage mobility of engineering licensure among US states, territories, and foreign countries as long as public safety, health and welfare is maintained.

To provide mobility with foreign countries, Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) between the National Council of Examiners for Engineers (NCEES) and their foreign equivalent should be encouraged, so long as the methods of establishing licensure in the two countries have been deemed equivalent in rigorousness. State boards are encouraged to adopt regulations to allow international comity, understanding individual states may continue to have requirements unique to engineering in those states.

NCEES and the Engineers Council of the United Kingdom [signed an MRA in April 2024](#) and 26 state boards agreed to consider adopting regulations to implement the MRA by signing on to it at the NCEES Annual Meeting in August 2024. The MRA builds on efforts by both organizations through the International Engineering Alliance and International Professional Engineers Agreement.

Professional Liability Trends Every Design Professional Should Know

Each year, NSPE, the American Institute of Architects, and the American Council of Engineering Companies join forces to conduct the annual [Professional Liability Insurance Carriers Survey](#) to provide highlight trends, coverage options, and risk management practices across the industry. Learn what's changing in professional liability and what it means for your firm in 2025 in a [new article](#).

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