

Open Letter to Governor Ted Kulongoski

Nov. 9, 2009

Governor Ted Kulongoski
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047

Dear Governor Kulongoski,

The public has packed hearings and rallies in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana, telling the region's official power planning agency that it's time to chart a clear course to a clean and coal-free energy future.

We applaud the Northwest Power and Conservation Council for its groundbreaking call for meeting virtually all of the region's new electricity needs over the next 20 years with conservation and new renewable energy. For the first time, the Northwest can look forward to covering growing electricity demand with no increase in greenhouse gas emissions. This is a monumental achievement, for which your Council representatives deserve much credit.

Today, however, we can and must do more. The draft Sixth Power and Conservation Plan would not do enough to achieve your and Oregon's legislatively established greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, nor those endorsed by Washington and Montana. It would not help Oregon or other Northwest states meet their commitments to the Western Climate Initiative. It would keep emissions flat but would not lead to the *reductions* in climate pollution that you have championed.

As a regional and national standard-bearer on climate change, you have strongly advocated for science-based *cuts* in climate emissions including cutting emissions to 10% below 1990 levels by 2020. The draft Sixth Power and Conservation Plan unfortunately does not chart a course by which the electric power system can actually reduce its emissions to meet these goals. Instead, it pushes off responsibility to Congress to pass regulation before the Northwest takes proactive steps to reduce emissions in the electric sector.

To do its part, the regional power system would have to directly confront the issue of coal, which provides more than 40% of Oregon's electricity and emits 87% of the Northwest power system's climate pollution. The Council has documented that the only way the power system can help meet Oregon and Western Climate Initiative commitments to reduce global-warming pollution is by phasing out reliance on the coal plants now serving the region, which include Oregon's Boardman plant, TransAlta's plant in Washington, and others in Montana, Wyoming and northern Nevada.

The Council should adopt an aggressive carbon reduction goal broadly consistent with the goals of the three states. Council staff research shows that the coal power now produced in Oregon and Washington and imported from other states can be replaced affordably. The Northwest has more than enough clean energy potential – bill-reducing energy efficiency and competitively priced new renewable energy sources – to meet increased electric needs, phase out coal, start the transition to electric-powered transportation, and recover endangered wild salmon and steelhead stocks.

In addition, the Council must help utilities incorporate a carbon price into their resource decisions. The draft plan offers no such guidance, but should. Global warming pollution will increasingly damage our state and region's health, environment and economy. By not explicitly pricing carbon, the Council sends a message to utilities and coal generators that global warming has no cost that must be accounted for. Council staff's recommended base-case carbon cost of \$47 per ton of CO2 should be included in the final plan, not simply as a possible risk, but to represent the real cost to society, a calculation required by the Northwest Power and Conservation Act.

Your Council representatives have led the way on this and other issues but have not always prevailed. Please encourage them to redouble their efforts and help the Council reach beyond the draft plan's laudable clean-energy goals and show real leadership on the most important environmental issue of our time. Please ask your fellow governors in Washington, Montana and Idaho to aid in this all-important endeavor.

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council can facilitate the orderly, responsible transition to a new, clean energy economy that will create business opportunities, put people to work at family-wage careers, fulfill our legal obligations and give us hope for a brighter future.

Governor, we can't get there without your help.

Sincerely,

NW Energy Coalition

Sierra Club

Oregon Environmental Council

Citizens' Utility Board of Oregon

Climate Solutions

Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition

Physicians for Social Responsibility: Oregon Chapter

NW Environmental Defense Center

Brett Swift, American Rivers

Jeff Hammarlund, Chair, Political & Public Affairs Committee, Earth and Spirit Council

Cc: Melinda Eden, Joan Dukes