



EPA'S CLEAN POWER PLAN

A Necessary Step That Is Long Overdue in the Fight Against Climate Change

THE CLEAN POWER PLAN

In June 2014, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed the first-ever carbon pollution limits for the nation's existing, and often antiquated, electricity generating plants. EPA's proposal is called the Clean Power Plan. Coal and natural gas-fired power plants are the largest sources of human-caused carbon pollution today, emitting about one-third of the U.S. greenhouse each year. President Obama recognized fossil-fuel-burning power plants' contribution to climate change and directed EPA to reduce their carbon pollution. EPA's proposed plan calls for a *nationwide* reduction of 730 million metric tons of carbon pollution by 2030 – a 30% reduction from national 2005 carbon pollution levels.

EPA held innumerable public meetings and stakeholder roundtables and was asked to design a rule that was flexible, state specific, and gave states the authority to design their own carbon reduction programs. EPA then analyzed each state's existing policies and electricity resources, and developed state-specific carbon pollution reduction goals. The proposed rule gives states broad flexibility to develop individual programs to reach their goals. This includes increasing reliance on renewable energy and energy efficiency to reduce statewide carbon pollution from electricity generation.

WHAT DOES THE CLEAN POWER PLAN DO?

EPA analyzed industry figures and scientific data, and designed a carbon pollution reduction goal for each state that is based upon estimates of carbon reductions from four building blocks:

1. Plants can operate 6% more efficiently.
2. States can emphasize lower carbon electricity sources such as nuclear and combined-cycle natural gas plants. (Montana does not have either type of plant so our reduction goal was not changed by this building block.)
3. States can rely more on renewable energy.
4. Each state can achieve a 1.5% annual increase in efficiency. (For Montana, that would mean a cumulative 11% savings from energy efficiency by 2030.)

EPA used the potential pollution reductions from each building block and applied it to each state's carbon pollution in 2012 to establish state goals. States must begin to show interim emission reductions by 2020 and reach their final goals by 2030.

Importantly, states do not have to use EPA's building blocks to attain their reduction goals. Each state can decide how it will meet its target. States could meet their goal by relying entirely on energy efficiency programs or renewable energy development, or whatever combination the state decides is best.

Protecting Montana's environment since 1973.

MONTANA'S GOAL SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED

Unfortunately, Montana received the second weakest carbon reduction goal in the nation. Our 21% pollution reduction goal by 2030 is based on calculations that underestimated Montana's renewable energy and energy efficiency potential. Montana could easily meet its goal without doing much beyond business as usual. Montana has the second best wind resource potential in the country. Wind energy is already far cheaper than electricity from the dirty old Colstrip plant, which puts 15 million tons of carbon pollution into the air each year. Montana has vast solar energy potential. Our energy efficiency potential remains untapped even though efficiency is by far the most affordable electricity resource available. Montana can and should do better. MEIC believes EPA should set a more effective goal for Montana of 30% reduction by 2030.

What the Clean Power Plan is NOT...

- It is not a one-size fits all approach. It does not require states to use any particular energy source to meet their targets. Instead states can choose what lower carbon energy sources are most economic, beneficial, and feasible for them.
- It is not about other sources of carbon pollution. EPA is already requiring carbon pollution limits on other pollution sources. For example, EPA adopted improved fuel efficiency requirements for vehicles and carbon pollution limits on new power plants.
- It will not raise electricity rates. EPA estimates electricity bills will decline by 8% by 2030. That's likely an underestimate for Montana where coal-fired electricity from Colstrip is consistently one of NorthWestern Energy's most expensive power sources.
- The lights won't go out nor will our energy system become unreliable. A commissioner on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the body in charge of grid reliability, told Congress in July 2014 that FERC supports the EPA rule and said FERC is already working to address the energy transition towards lower carbon energy sources that has been underway for several years already. He is confident that FERC can continue to work with states and regions to meet this challenge by 2030.

How to Comment

Comments are due by October 16, 2014.

You can submit them electronically at Email A-and-R-Docket@epa.gov

Or mail comments to: Environmental Protection Agency, EPA Docket Center (EPA/DC), Mailcode 28221T, Attention Docket ID No. OAR-2013-0602, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20460.

Join others Montanans Who Support the Rule

Who supports EPA adopting rules to limit carbon pollution from power plants?

- Montana scientists. 102 scientists who have lived, worked, and/or studied in Montana support urgent action on climate change, including support for EPA's proposed power plant rules.
- Montana smokejumpers. Former Montana smokejumpers urged action on climate change due to the increasing danger from wildfires. They support action to reduce carbon pollution including EPA's efforts to limit carbon pollution from power plants.
- Montana medical providers. 57 Montana medical providers have joined together to support protecting public health by limiting carbon pollution from power plants.
- Montana veterans. Montana veterans urged support for EPA's power plant rule because of the impact climate change is having on national security.
- Montana businesses. 21 Montana businesses have supported EPA's efforts to curb carbon pollution from power plants because of the economic impact of climate change.