

NW Energy Coalition 3- to 5-Year Strategic Plan for 2012

Adopted by the NW Energy Coalition Executive Board Feb. 16, 2012

Overview

The NW Energy Coalition has spent the last 30 years developing and advocating policies that promote energy efficiency and new renewable energy resources, protect consumers and restore fish and wildlife harmed by the Northwest hydropower system.

With more than 110 organizational members across four Northwest states and British Columbia encompassing utilities, clean energy businesses, unions, faith groups, consumer advocates and environmental/wildlife conservation groups, the Coalition occupies a unique space within the clean energy arena. Our diversity gives us leverage, access, accountability and respect.

The Coalition's strategic plan establishes priorities and guides allocation of staff resources. The Coalition Board revisits the plan in response to changes in the economic, political and technological landscape.

Some things don't change. The NW Energy Coalition always will be anchored to its four pillars: efficiency, renewables, consumer interests and power system-related fish and wildlife protection. Energy efficiency remains the mission of missions due to its low costs, multiple benefits and wide availability. Efficiency, however, cannot be isolated from the other three pillars. Each is critical to achieving a clean and affordable energy future for all.

The Coalition's unique value is its ability to strengthen the connections among the four missions, to break down the barriers that artificially segregate integrally related issues. We forge alliances among efficiency, renewables, salmon restoration and low-income advocates; between investor-owned and public utilities; between renewable energy/transmission developers and protectors of nature, privacy rights and bill-payers' pocketbooks. We work with tribes, communities, non-profit organizations, regulatory and rate-setting agencies, legislatures, codes councils, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC).

This Strategic Plan sets priorities for continuing the Coalition's vital work in the pillar areas, as well as for general administrative, outreach and communications support functions.

The NW Energy Coalition's top policy goals for the coming period:

1. Meet all regional electric load growth, as well as replacement of expiring fossil-fueled power contracts, with cost-effective energy efficiency and new renewable energy.
2. Fulfill the energy efficiency and other clean energy targets of the Sixth Northwest Power and Conservation Plan.
3. Secure agreements to transition all the remaining coal power serving the Northwest to clean energy as soon as possible.

4. Oppose development of new nuclear fission power facilities unless and until costs, waste, safety, and proliferation issues are resolved.
5. Protect the interests of low-income households and other consumers, labor, disadvantaged communities and people of color and local economies in energy policy and siting decisions.
6. Advocate effective restoration of fish and wildlife harmed by the Federal Columbia River Power System.
7. Address wildlife/wildlands concerns in transmission siting processes.
8. Expand energy efficiency efforts for non-electrically heated buildings.

The Coalition's top organizational goals for the coming period:

1. Build the Coalition's utility and clean energy business membership numbers.
2. Increase member involvement in state/provincial and constituency caucuses.
3. Diversify and increase Coalition funding.
4. Maintain adequate staffing – numerically and geographically – to carry out the strategic plan.

I. Clean energy

Overarching goals

- Meet all regional electric load growth and replace expiring fossil power contracts with cost-effective energy efficiency and new renewable energy.
- Meet half of all regional natural-gas load growth with cost-effective energy efficiency.
- Continue to shift the Northwest off of coal by closing or transitioning plants now serving the region from coal, and seeking to replace that power with energy efficiency and new, clean renewable energy. Oppose life-extending retrofits of highly polluting plants. Transitioning off of coal is essential to combating global warming.
- Balance the sometimes-conflicting interests of utilities, consumers, work force, local community, the environment and other stakeholders when developing new generation and transmission and when working to close or transition existing coal-fired plants.
- Overcome barriers the current pricing system presents to clean energy development.
- Optimize the use of existing dispatchable natural gas resources and add new ones only as necessary to integrate variable renewable resources.
- Oppose development of new nuclear power facilities and ensure that the problems associated with nuclear energy are presented when nuclear power is promoted as a useful or necessary response to climate change.
- Work to fulfill the clean energy goals in the Sixth Northwest Power and Conservation Plan while influencing development of the Seventh Plan.

A. Energy efficiency

- Achieve at least the high case energy efficiency target in the Sixth Power and Conservation Plan's 5-year action plan.
- Advocate establishment of energy efficiency targets for natural gas utilities in each Northwest state similar to electric energy efficiency requirements such as Washington I-937

and the investment requirements in Oregon's public benefits fund and Montana's universal system benefits charge (USBC).

- Advocate regulatory changes that help overcome disincentives to and provide incentives for energy efficiency investments by utilities and consumers while protecting consumers from unwarranted costs.
- Advocate reducing barriers and increasing incentives for high efficiency combined heat and power (CHP) investments.
- Assure utilities and other energy efficiency program providers use evaluation, monitoring and verification (EM&V) programs that accurately measure the effectiveness and costs of efficiency investments.
- Advocate and defend strengthened energy codes for buildings, appliances, equipment and other devices.

B. Renewable energy

- Promote aggressive investment in environmentally sound development of a wide array of large-, distributed- and small-scale renewable energy resources
 - to meet electric load growth beyond that met by energy efficiency.
 - to help the regional power system transition from coal and
 - to replace resources in utilities' expiring power purchase agreements.
- Advocate an appropriate mix of incentives, policies and siting guidelines to facilitate a growing renewable energy market in the Northwest.
- Carefully appraise emerging renewables that have raised concerns, such as woody biomass, municipal solid waste and small hydro; where appropriate, develop criteria for evaluating specific proposals involving these renewables.
- Build public will for wind, solar and other new renewables. Correct misinformation about availability, reliability and costs/bills for new renewables; explain their economic and environmental benefits.
- Engage in renewable energy facility siting issues as appropriate and necessary, such as when they are likely to set state or regional precedents.
- Fulfill renewable energy standards in the states in which they exist.

C. Transmission/smart grid

- Limit new line construction by taking advantage of any capacity resulting from coal plant transitions and through such "non-wires" strategies as increased energy efficiency, more efficient use of the existing transmission system, and clean distributed energy installations including solar, community wind, geothermal, etc.
- Work with WECC, WCEA, BPA, ColumbiaGrid, Northern Tier Transmission Group, wildlife/wildlands advocates, landowners and other stakeholders in the transition to Northwest and west wide integrated transmission planning aimed at developing community- and ecologically friendly transmission paths/lines when absolutely needed to bring new renewable generation to load centers.
- Advocate transmission system operation that optimizes the amounts of energy efficiency and renewable energy in the power system.

- Balance the potential benefits of smart meters with the need for privacy and other protections for consumers and low-income households.
- Encourage the use of advanced technology to enhance grid reliability and utility distribution and transmission system efficiency and effectiveness.

D. Coal

- Secure agreements to transition all the remaining coal power serving the Northwest to clean energy as soon as possible; work to broaden stakeholder involvement in achieving this goal.
- Assure clean energy resources are fully and fairly evaluated as replacements for the power now generated by the Boardman, Ore., and Centralia, Wash., coal plants. Monitor use of community assistance and clean energy project funds associated with both plants' agreed-upon transitions off of coal.
- Evaluate additional transition targets such as coal-fired industrial boilers.
- Demand that any *new* coal plant safely and effectively captures and sequesters 90% of its carbon emissions beginning on Day 1 of operation.
- Support the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in its efforts to regulate coal-fired power plants to reduce water use, greenhouse gas emissions and the release of toxics and criteria air pollutants.

II. Consumer/low-income and labor

- Advocate clean energy investments, especially those that lower consumers' utility bills.
- Assure that all households have access to affordable energy to meet essential needs while supporting utility rate design that minimizes reliance on fixed charges to recover billing costs and emphasizes inclining block rates.
- Advocate comprehensive low-income energy efficiency services and, where appropriate, bill assistance for low-income customers.
- Assure that utility cost recovery for investments in energy efficiency (and feed-in tariffs or other incentives for distributed generation) places no undue burdens on consumers, especially low-income households.
- Balance the potential benefits of smart meters with the need for privacy and other protections for consumers and low-income households. In particular:
 - Assure the costs of smart meters justify the benefits.
 - Make sure smart meters and other customer technologies do not put consumers' privacy at risk
 - Advocate policies assuring due process in remote, involuntary service shutoffs.
 - Oppose use of smart meters to impose prepayment requirements, large security deposits, mandatory time-of-service charges or other penalties on customers.
- Broaden stakeholder involvement to engage consumers (particularly low-income consumers), labor, disadvantaged communities and people of color in the development of renewable energy, energy efficiency and transmission policies and projects.
- Support consumers and their communities in coal plant transition processes. Work with labor and affected communities to help mitigate the consequences of closing or transitioning coal

plants and to develop the resources and skills needed to work in the new clean energy economy.

III. Fish & wildlife

- Advocate restoration of fish and wildlife endangered or threatened by the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS), including removal of the four lower Snake River dams, if necessary.
- Advocate establishment of a broad stakeholders' "solutions table" to resolve legal, economic, and political issues and develop an effective restoration plan for salmon and steelhead in FCRPS.
- Provide technical expertise on the Northwest power system and clean energy potential, costs and benefits to the salmon recovery campaign and to the solutions table if one is established.
- Demonstrate that the region has ample energy efficiency and new renewable energy potential to replace generation given up to restore wild salmon runs.
- Encourage adjusting regional hydrosystem operations to account for climate change-related shifts in precipitation patterns and snowmelt timing, and to account for the increasing importance of salmon stocks from high-altitude habitats less affected by global warming.
- Incorporate fish and wildlife and ecosystem concerns into new transmission and renewable energy facility planning to assure the new power and its transmission are truly clean.
- Defend existing ecosystem protection rules and statutes.

IV. Outreach/Communications

A. Membership

- Expand and diversify the Coalition membership by recruiting utilities and environmental, business, labor and consumer/low-income groups committed to clean energy.
- Add at least two new clean energy businesses or business association members each year.
- Strengthen the Coalition's relationships with utility members by meeting each of them at least once a year specifically to discuss membership matters.

B. Caucuses

- Strengthen NWECA caucuses to increase member and ally engagement in state and regional policy venues and campaigns that help achieve our strategic goals.
- Enhance member involvement through increased attendance at Board and caucus meetings and participation in other Coalition activities.
- Build the capacity of each caucus to create action plans and help implement Coalition goals.
- Engage caucus members in creating and implementing state/provincial and regional action plans.
- Build new caucus chair leadership, in part through establishment of vice chairs.

C. Board leadership

- Identify new Board representatives and alternate Board representatives for our members; cultivate additional contacts within member organizations.
- Develop Board and Executive Board members' ability to engage and mobilize other members.
- Continually identify and work to develop potential new Executive Board leaders.
- Include Board and Executive Board members in fundraising and membership development efforts.

D. Communications

- Enhance the Coalition's visibility and reputation as "go-to" clean energy experts through relevant, timely website postings and other materials, cultivating media relationships and public speaking engagements by staff and other spokespersons.
- Update our membership brochure and produce printed annual reports.
- Seek new and more effective means, in addition to *The Transformer* and other existing publications, for presenting our policy analyses to both general and expert audiences.
- Meet directly with reporters, using success stories to help pivot the clean energy conversation away from controversy toward benefits such as stable energy costs, reduced pollution, job creation, economic development and meeting climate goals.
- Focus opinion pieces, press releases and media contacts on all of our core issues, including low-income/consumer protection in energy decisions and restoration of fish and wildlife harmed by the Northwest energy system. Stress the common benefits of a clean energy economy.
- Make the Coalition website a more effective resource for policy experts through timely, easy-to-find postings on policy issues.
- Use webinar and other new media means of delivering our messages and policies as appropriate.

E. Campaigns

- In coordination with allies' efforts, conduct outreach/education on the benefits of renewable energy to bolster public acceptance of new development and blunt the effects of the anti-wind (and, by extension, anti all new renewables) public relations campaign being waged by clean energy opponents.
- Engage consumers (particularly low-income consumers), labor, disadvantaged communities and people of color in development of renewable energy, energy efficiency and transmission policies and projects.
- Raise awareness of the positive connections among clean energy, consumer protection, wildlife/wildlands, job creation and general economic prosperity. Overcome the perception that salmon recovery must conflict with renewable energy development and/or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Explain that "clean and affordable energy" does not include projects that endanger species or destroy ecosystems.

- Continue to link Coalition policies and advocacy with the climate change challenge; participate in efforts aimed at strengthening Northwest leadership in the worldwide climate change campaign.

V. Coalition resources

A. Issue allocation

- The core missions of the Coalition are energy efficiency, renewable energy, consumer/low-income and fish/wildlife. Of these, energy efficiency is the first priority.
- Transitioning coal plants now serving Northwest loads off of coal has become an important mission of the Coalition.

B. Geographic allocation

- Coalition staff resources should go:
 - First to regional efforts, such as the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (implementing the Sixth Power and Conservation Plan) and the Bonneville Power Administration, Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and to our joint responsibilities with Save Our wild Salmon and the Renewable Northwest Project.
 - Second to state and individual utility efforts.
- Provide regional context and expert analyses of complex issues to support state allies' efforts.
- In conjunction with appropriate regional allies, help state groups with rate cases, legislation, rulemaking and siting issues.
- Devote relatively few resources to federal legislative work.

C. Funding

In conjunction with the newly hired fundraising consultant:

- Diversify grant-funding sources through the addition of three steady foundation sources.
- Build a major donor program as outlined in the fundraising plan.
- Maintain the 40% increased funding levels achieved over the past three years.

D. Staffing/staff development

- Set appropriate staffing numbers and levels of expertise to accomplish the goals of the annual work plans.
- Evaluate the need to make permanent the (now temporary) positions in Montana, Idaho and Oregon. Find funding as appropriate.
- Develop a realistic succession plan for the Coalition executive director and pod directors.