



King County

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

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April 26, 2021

Chair David Danner
Commissioner Ann Rendahl
Commissioner Jay Balasbas
Utilities and Transportation Commission
621 Woodland Square Loop SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Re: Docket UE-210241

Dear Chair Danner and Commissioners Rendahl and Balasbas:

I am writing to express my support for an investigation into the financial prudence of Puget Sound Energy's (PSE) continued operations of Colstrip Units 3 & 4. I have long called for the closure of Colstrip because of its deleterious impact on our climate, and it's clear now that continued operation of the plant is not fiscally prudent, resulting in higher costs for ratepayers, many who live in King County.

Confronting climate change and accelerating the transition to a clean energy economy are top priorities of my administration. My 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) is King County's guiding document for climate policy and investments in emission reduction, climate equity, and preparedness. The SCAP establishes goals and targets for King County operations, but also at the communitywide scale to reach shared goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050 as established through the Growth Management Planning Council. Decarbonizing our electricity supplies in line with the targets of the Clean Electricity Transformation Act is essential to reaching our emission reduction goals.

As I mentioned in my October 8, 2020 letter to you opposing PSE's proposed sale of Colstrip Unit 4 to Northwestern Energy, coal fired electricity generation is declining in the United States not only for climate concerns, but because of the economic reality that it is not a low-cost source of power. Especially now, as thousands of Washington residents are still experiencing financial hardship from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to ensure that utilities are providing electricity at fair and reasonable rates.

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Climate change is no longer a future problem, we see the impacts around us now, putting people, our economy, and our environment at risk. We must act with urgency to address climate change – our greatest threat – that has disproportionate impacts to Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities. PSE has made strides toward decarbonizing its generation mix while providing essential reliability, including the Green Direct program and entering into contracts for hydropower, but the prolonged operation of Colstrip Units 3 and 4 places financial risk on ratepayers now for high-cost power and on ratepayers later for additional cleanup costs that will only increase the longer the plant operates. Additionally, PSE and a broad suite of stakeholders negotiated an orderly transition for workers at closure of Colstrip, for which PSE pledged \$10 million. We need to honor those commitments to impacted workers.

I encourage the Utilities and Transportation Commission to reduce the future risk to ratepayers and the impact to the climate by investigating the financial prudence of continued operations of Units 3 and 4. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dow Constantine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dow Constantine
King County Executive