

To the Utilities and Transportation Commission:

I ask that you consider my comments regarding Puget Sound Energy's Integrated Resource Plan now before you. PSE is my power utility and I have been impressed with the ability for me to select green power (which I have, for a number of years now). They have a reputation for their forward-leaning thinking with wind farms and conservation programs.

That said, I was amazed and, quite frankly, horrified to learn recently that 60 percent of their power comes from fossil fuel – roughly 30 percent from natural gas, and another 30 percent from the Colstrip plant in Montana. Although I have serious concerns with hydrolic fracturing in the extraction of natural gas, my comments today are focused on coal.

I understand that PSE has a mandate to deliver power at the lowest cost. What we are not considering is the carbon and climate costs of coal.

Global climate change is the most serious challenge today in the future of our planet. I implore you to read last summer's article by Bill McKibben, Climate Change's Terrifying New Math. Attached is a link, and I ask that you read it carefully. McKibben directs us to three numbers in the terrifying new math.

The first number is 2 degrees Celsius. This is the singular thing that came from the failed 2009 Copenhagen summit on climate, and the one thing that the US has agreed to, along with 166 other nations. 2 degrees. It is the number beyond which life on this planet is totally uncertain, and in fact many scientists believe it is far too lenient a target, and some call it a "suicide pact". We are currently at 1 degree of warming and we see 1/3 of the arctic sea ice gone, our oceans are 1/3 more acidic, storms such as Katrina and Sandy ravage our cities, devastating wild fires in Russia and the US, floods the like of which we saw in Pakistan, and severe impacts from both flooding and drought to agricultural areas world-wide. At 2 degrees, we will see more and more unprecedented storms and weather conditions, and we will likely not have potable water and food for the planet. We may not survive to 2 degrees. **Our planet certainly will not survive, as it is, beyond 2 degrees of warming, and it may spell the end of human existence as we know it.**

The second number is 565 gigatons. Scientists predict the global community can pour another 565 gigatons of carbon into the atmosphere before we hit 2 degrees of warming. At our current rate this will occur in 15 years. This means we have 15 years to build a sustainable, green energy infrastructure, and get ourselves on the path to be completely off of fossil fuel. We need solar, wind, geothermal, tidal and we need it now. Within the timeframe of PSE's IRP we need to have made serious strides toward a carbon-free future.

The third number: 2,795 gigatons. This is the amount of coal, oil and gas reserves already discovered, identified and on the balance sheets, and stockholder portfolios, of the fossil fuel companies. 2,230 gigatons of the identified 2,795 gigatons represents the amount of fossil fuel we need to **KEEP IN THE GROUND, lest we destroy the earth as we know it.**

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I'd like to think that PSE is a good company, doing their best to fulfill their mandate. It's just, the metrics of determining the true cost of coal are sorely incomplete. If the true cost of carbon, and global climate change, were included in the calculations, there would be no way for their 20-year plan to include coal. Natural gas may need to be used to bridge the gap for a short time, and should be identified as such, but there can be no reasonable room for coal in the 20-year equation. We need to see a plan that phases it out as soon as possible.

A truly sustainable future may seem like a daunting and impossible task. But we can get there if we take smart, deliberate and reasoned steps toward it. We need a determined redirection to a future that moves us from fossil fuel to sustainable sources of energy, and counts the true costs of fossil fuel in the equation. Small steps can have big impacts. If the money that PSE will need to invest in Colstrip were redirected to solar and wind, it would provide opportunity for good jobs in solar and wind – the things we must transition to in the next two decades. And more rate security for their customers.

We have but a short window to create a truly sustainable and affordable future. We need the political will to do it, and we are here to help give you that political will. Our very future depends on it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Margo Polley
PO Box 431
North Bend, WA