

**Comment on Puget Sound Energy 2017 Integrated Resource Plans for Electricity and Natural Gas, Dockets UE-160918 (electricity) and UG-160919 (natural gas)
1/17/18**

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) has filed a 20-year energy plan, or “Integrated Resource Plan” to be assessed by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission. In evaluating this plan, the Seattle chapter of 500 Women Scientists urges the commission to ensure that PSE does not burden customers with the externalized costs of rampant carbon pollution, which are born on both current and future ratepayers.

Specifically, PSE currently owns four units of the Colstrip Power Plant in Montana. We support PSE’s existing commitment to retire two of these units by 2025, but we strongly advise PSE to additionally commit to retire the remaining two units by 2025. We also call on PSE to replace the power currently generated from the Colstrip Power Plant with clean, renewable energy sources.

Evidence of human-influence on climate change is clear and has global effects ([IPCC 2013](#)). In the Puget Sound region, climate change is expected to bring about increased wildfires, higher flood risks, hazardous air quality, harmful effects on salmon populations, and reduced snowpack, among other effects ([Mauger et al. 2015](#)). Given these direct, negative impacts on Puget Sound residents, PSE customers have substantial, personal interests in reducing climate change. However, to limit the effects of climate change “substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions” are needed ([IPCC 2013](#)). Moving from coal-based power to renewable energy is the most effective way for PSE to reduce its externalized cost burden on rate-payers, and to our region at large.

Furthermore, Washington State, King County, and many cities served by PSE are signatories on the [“we are still in”](#) pledge committing to the goals of the Paris Accords regardless of the federal government’s actions. This includes “working together to take forceful action and to ensure that the U.S. remains a global leader in reducing emissions.” A clear step to achieve this is to ensure that the power in our homes, schools, and businesses are not exacerbating climate change. Closing the Colstrip Power Plant and moving to renewable energy sources will preserve the integrity of our commitments, while reducing the harms to our health, economies, and natural resources caused by climate change.

While the negative effects of climate change demand a swift reduction in greenhouse house gas emissions, we understand that closing the Colstrip Power Plant in Montana will affect the community in Colstrip. Therefore, as a transition is made to clean energy, we also expect PSE to demonstrate social responsibility by creating transition funds for those whose current livelihoods are dependent on coal. With proper planning, addressing climate change need not be a source of economic hardship.

As a member-driven organization of women scientists, many of whom are PSE rate-payers, we ask that the commission include the high externalized costs of carbon-based power in PSE’s Integrated Resource Plan and ensure that PSE transition as quickly and responsibly as possible to renewable energy.

[500 Women Scientists](#) is an international organization composed of women scientists whose mission is to serve society by making science open, inclusive, and accessible. Our [Seattle chapter](#) has members with significant expertise in climate science, public policy, and environmental issues.

References:

IPCC, 2013: Summary for Policymakers. In: [Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) [Stocker,T.F., D. Qin, G.-K. Plattner, M. Tignor, S.K. Allen, J. Boschung, A. Nauels, Y.

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Mauger, G.S., J.H. Casola, H.A. Morgan, R.L. Strauch, B. Jones, B. Curry, T.M. Busch Isaksen, L. Whitely Binder, M.B. Krosby, and A.K. Snover, 2015. [*State of Knowledge: Climate Change in Puget Sound*](#). Report prepared for the Puget Sound Partnership and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Climate Impacts Group, University of Washington, Seattle. doi 10.7915/CIG93777D.