



Eastside Audubon

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July 31, 2017

Subject : PSE Rate Hearing, Docket Numbers UE-170033 and UG 170034

Eastside Audubon Society is writing to ask that the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) carefully consider the potential for Puget Sound Energy's proposed electric rate increase to alter the utility's commitment to coal-free operation by the year 2025. In particular, we are concerned that some part of the proposed revenue increase would allow PSE to continue obtaining energy from Colstrip coal mines beyond that year.

The Eastside Audubon chapter serves an area east of Lake Washington, north of I-90 to the county line and east to the Cascades. We have approximately 300 members belonging to this local chapter, and many more belonging to the National Audubon Society. Our mission is to protect, preserve and enhance natural ecosystems and our communities for the benefit of birds, other wildlife and people.

Why would a bird-oriented organization like Eastside Audubon be commenting about a rise in electric rates? It's because of our concern about the role of fossil fuels in the warming of our climate. In 2014 the National Audubon Society published a rigorous study of the projected effects of climate change on the habitat for 588 North American bird species. It concluded that a majority of them—314 species—will lose more than 50 percent of their current ranges by the year 2080, if current rates of CO2 production continue. Many familiar species of birds in Washington would encounter this environmental threat.

Eastside Audubon members several years ago attended legislative hearings in Olympia concerning a schedule for reducing the state's dependence on coal-fired plants, resulting in a target year of 2025.

We understand that one result of PSE's proposed rate increase could be to prolong the utility's use of power from the Colstrip power plant by using coal from an enlarged Rosebud coal mine. Physically enlarging that mine could enable it to continue its operating life beyond the previously understood termination date of 2025. We believe this would be a mistake. King County's Strategic Climate Action Plan, endorsed by 14 King County mayors, calls on the County to "...phase out coal-fired electricity sources by 2025...."

We believe that PSE should commit to a cessation of its coal-fired power by the year 2025. We trust that the outcome of any rate adjustment will support that schedule.

Respectfully,

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