

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)
Subcommittee on Environment
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“State Perspectives: How EPA’s Power Plan Will Shut Down Power Plants”
Environment Subcommittee Hearing

September 11, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today to discuss the Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan. I am especially pleased to welcome Mr. Jason Eisdorfer, a fellow Oregonian. I’m looking forward to learning more about Oregon’s work to implement the Clean Power Plan and I’m glad you will discuss some of the successes our state has had in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The mission of EPA is important yet simple – to protect human health and the environment. The goal of the Clean Power Plan is equally important and simple — to cut carbon emissions from the largest source, the power sector, so that we can lessen the effects of climate change on our states, our country, and our planet.

The Clean Power Plan offers enormous flexibility to states as they tackle their individual carbon emission targets and the collective goal of reducing carbon emissions by 32 percent by the year 2030.

Inaction is unacceptable. The Pacific Northwest faces risks that Oregonians take very seriously. For example, according to the National Climate Assessment, the snowpack in the Cascade Mountains has decreased by 20 percent compared to 1950, and what snow remains melts about 30 days earlier than usual. These changes are putting additional pressure on the region’s water supply.

Also the coastline and the health of our commercial fisheries are threatened by rising seas and ocean acidification. Thousands of salmon from the Columbia River died this summer because the water was too warm. These and other changes have the potential to negatively affect not only the safety, but also the economic security of my constituents.

Thankfully Oregon is a state that has been proactive in efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. As a result, Oregon can be a resource for states that are just beginning to address this important challenge.

As a former member of Oregon’s state legislature, I helped establish some of the state’s carbon emissions reduction goals. For example, in 2007, Oregon set a target of reducing statewide emissions by 75 percent by 2050. We also set the goal of having up to 25 percent of our energy generated through renewable sources by 2025. These efforts and others have put Oregon in a

position to not only meet, but likely surpass, its Clean Power Plan carbon reduction goal. And all while maintaining a healthy and vibrant economy.

Oregon is a leader in renewable energy technology and many businesses have developed new products that add jobs to our economy and are energy efficient. One innovative example is Lucid Energy, which has developed technology to generate electricity through a hydropower system in existing city water pipes.

Some today will likely contend that regulating carbon hurts the economy. But a recent report by Citigroup adds to the growing body of evidence showing that this is simply not the case. The report states: “We are not climate scientists, nor are we trying to take sides in the global warming debate, rather we are trying to take an objective look at the economics of the discussion, to assess the incremental costs and impacts of mitigating the effects of emissions, to see if there is a 'solution' which offers global opportunities without penalizing global growth.”

The authors conclude: “the incremental costs of following a low carbon path are in context limited and seem affordable, the 'return' on that investment is acceptable and moreover the likely avoided liabilities are enormous.”

When you have climate scientists and economists agreeing that action to address climate change is necessary and that the benefits outweigh the risks, then it is time for our country to stop dragging its feet and to move forward as a nation and a global leader.

The Clean Power Plan builds on the efforts of states like Oregon by creating a unified, national approach to our biggest environmental challenge. The Clean Power Plan represents an opportunity for American ingenuity that will allow us to benefit from the much needed transition to a low carbon economy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning. I yield back the balance of my time.