



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Public Engagement Encouraged as Wisconsin Charts its Energy Future

Few American's think about the grid and the future of energy when switching on a porch light or charging up their cell phones, but many are concerned about where energy comes from. Whether that electric current comes from hydropower from rivers, a coal-fired power plant, or a solar panel on a roof, all energy systems have costs as well as benefits, and these vary as markets and resources evolve. While many people may feel they lack technical background on complex energy topics, Wisconsin's future economy and quality of life will be impacted by directions taken in the next few years.

The good news is that Gov. Evers' recently released 2021-2023 budget addresses many of Wisconsin's energy issues. "There are nearly 30 clean energy provisions in this budget, and it is one of the best environmental and energy budgets I have seen in decades" according to Paul Heinen, Wisconsin's Green Fire's Legislative Liaison.

While the governor's proposed budget is a step in the right direction, tackling climate change and preparing for the energy needs of the future, it is important for Wisconsin's citizens to be engaged in the process. Luckily, the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) and Governor Evers' office are both seeking input on energy planning efforts in the coming weeks and months.

The first public comment opportunity is the PSC "Roadmap to Zero Carbon" investigative docket (Docket 5-EI-158) on the ongoing transition to zero-carbon electricity generation in Wisconsin. The docket will evaluate a wide range of topics, including those from the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change Report, and Wisconsin utilities' announced goals to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

To help set initial priorities for this open docket investigation, public comments to the PSC must be received by May 14, 2021. For more information on the docket and how to participate visit:

<https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERF/comment/filecomment.aspx?util=5&case=EI&num=158>

(It is helpful to compose your comments in a separate word document that can be copied and pasted into the comments section as there is a 10 minute timer on that page.)

The second comment opportunity for citizens is being led by the Governor's Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy. They will be conducting energy planning, and a clean energy plan will be released in early summer 2021.

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If you are interested in engaging with energy policy in Wisconsin but are overwhelmed by this complex issue, there are some organizations that have been working to research and compile a comprehensive set of resources to help the public understand and engage in this important effort. The first is Wisconsin's Green Fire: Voices for Conservation (WGF), a nonpartisan organization promoting science in decision-making. WGF has produced webinars and policy papers on energy topics, including their recently released report *The Future is Now - Creating a 21st Century Energy Policy*. The report includes recommendations for new ways of managing how and where energy is distributed, new energy waste reduction opportunities, establishing greater energy efficiency standards for utilities to better control demand and reduce carbon emissions, adopting utility performance-based ratemaking, and empowering local governments.

In their report WGF identified key energy budget items such as expanding funding for the Focus on Energy program, considering the social cost of carbon, establishing a technical assistance grant program to assist municipalities and tribal nations, and developing climate risk assessment and resilience plans for municipalities. WGF's Energy Policy Work Group co-chair, Gary Radloff, asserts, "All these are achievable current opportunities to reduce the impacts of climate change." To learn more and access these resources visit: <https://wigreenfire.org/category/energy-policy/>

Another organization working on energy issues in Wisconsin is the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA). MREA focuses on promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable living through education and demonstration projects and www.RiseUpMidwest.org, a coalition of businesses, individuals, organizations, jurisdictions, and workforce development partners who work in coordination to create commonsense, strategic, and swift actions to stimulate clean energy market development. For more information: <https://www.midwestrenew.org/>

Both of these organizations offer resources to help citizens go the extra mile and weigh in this spring and summer by providing comments to help state agencies plan improvements to Wisconsin's energy systems.

Executive Director of Wisconsin's Green Fire, Fred Clark says, "It is a great time for citizens to take part in the energy democracy process. The sooner we modernize our Wisconsin energy systems and policies, the faster we will catch up with our neighboring Midwest states and work together to mitigate the effects of climate change while strengthening our economy."

If citizens and leaders around the state work together to develop innovative and thoughtful energy policy, future generations will thank us for our efforts.