PublicService Commission <psc@utah.gov>

Docket No. 17-035-61 Concerns

1 message

Carlin Johnson <carlin.d.johnson@gmail.com> Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 9:50 AM
To: psc@utah.gov

To whom it may concern,

I was recently made aware of the Rocky Mountain Power's request to again lower Utah net-metering rates. Although this would benefit RMP, I think it would have a much more negative impact on Utah families and businesses.

Solar is growing a lot in Utah, and net-metering is a big incentive to make that happen. At some point in the future, the change may make more sense. However, any requests to change net-metering rates should be considered using cost/benefit analyses by a neutral third-party.

For now, especially with Utah's Covid-19 strategy for economic recovery and revitalization, it will do more harm than good. Many Utah businesses and homeowners rely/will rely on the net-metering benefit in choosing to "go solar". A decrease in those benefits will end the expansion of residential solar, jobs will be lost and both the economic and environmental growth Utah is experiencing in the solar industry will be lost.

As an employee in the solar industry and a beneficiary of residential solar production, I would hate to see that happen.

The PSC should reject RMP's plan and rule to keep it as is - for the good of Utah, its residents and its local businesses.

Carlin Johnson

PublicService Commission <psc@utah.gov>

Docket No: 17-035-61

1 message

Eleanor Thompson <eleanor@eleanorthompson.com> Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 9:11 AM
To: PSC UT <psc@utah.gov>

Dear UT PSC Commissioners,
This write up on RMP + PC is so excellent I wanted to share it with all of you. The more we all learn about RMP + PC, the better we will be able to deal with voting on all aspects of Docket 17-035-61.

Kind regards,

Eleanor

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---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Inside Clean Energy** <newsletters@insideclimatenews.org>
Date: Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 9:01 AM
Subject: Inside Clean Energy: The Coal-Country Utility that Wants to Cut Coal
To: <eleanor@eleanorthompson.com>

INSIDECLEANENERGY by Dan Gearino

I normally don’t feel sympathy for a utility, but consider what it is like trying to satisfy customers and regulators from coal-loving Wyoming all the way to the parts of the Pacific Northwest that are eager to embrace clean energy.

This is the task that confronts PacifiCorp, a subsidiary of Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway Energy, a company that is aiming to ramp up its use of renewable energy at the same time as it navigates some extreme differences of opinion about what the energy future should look like. PacifiCorp’s territory

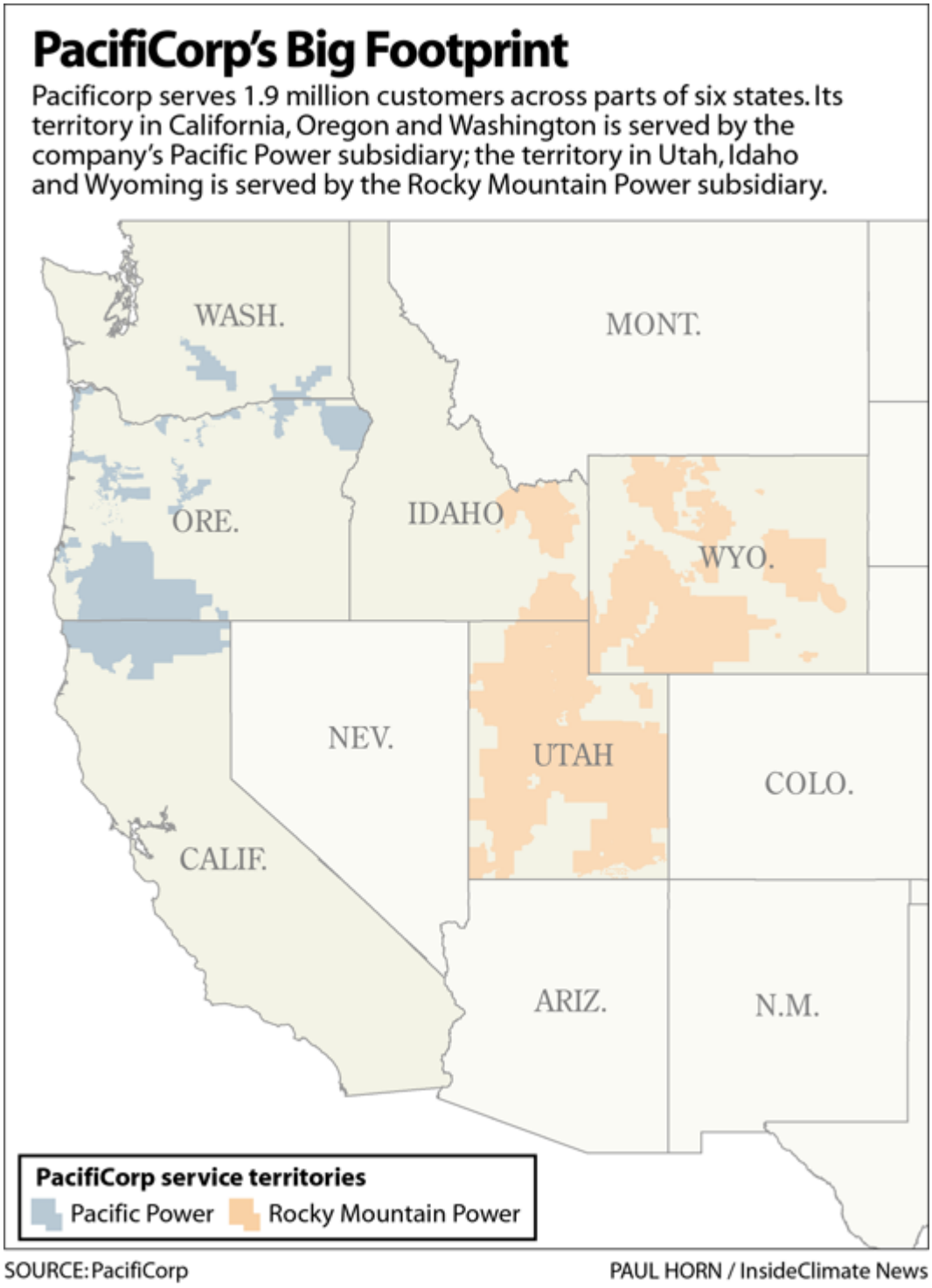
includes parts of California, Oregon, Washington State, Utah, Idaho and Wyoming.

The company said last week that it was seeking proposals from developers for a major investment in clean energy, with 1.9 gigawatts of new wind power, 1.8 gigawatts of new solar and 595 megawatts of new battery storage, all to be installed by the end of 2023.

The projects are part of a commitment to get electricity from sources that are “affordable, reliable and increasingly sustainable,” said Rick Link, PacifiCorp’s vice president of resource planning, in a statement.

This follows the company’s announcement last fall of a long-term plan that included accelerating the shutdown schedule for most coal-fired power plants. Some of the plants would close in 2030 and others would close in 2038, which is sooner than previously planned.

“I think they’re doing a relatively good job of managing the transition, given the circumstances, even though I would like to see it happen faster,” said Hunter Holman, a staff attorney for Utah Clean Energy.



Holman told me that PacifiCorp is responding to economics, not politics, because building new renewable energy is now less expensive than continuing to operate old coal plants.

But politics are unavoidable. On Monday, Wyoming utility regulators began a trial-like process to scrutinize PacifiCorp's plan to close coal-fired plants and put a spotlight on the economic harm that would be done to coal communities.

There is no apparent precedent for this kind of trial, and it's not clear whether

Wyoming officials have any power to keep the plants open.

Wyoming has a disproportionately large share of PacifiCorp's coal-fired power plants. At the same time, the state's consumers account for just 17 percent of the company's electricity sales, one reason Wyoming regulators have few options for forcing the company's hand.

It's a different story in Utah, which accounts for 45 percent of PacifiCorp's electricity sales, and where state regulators play a big role in what happens with PacifiCorp's plan.

The Utah Public Service Commission had the opportunity to endorse PacifiCorp's 2019 plan to reduce its coal plants and increase renewables, but officials said in May they were withholding their approval and wanted the company to provide more evidence about the costs and the implications for grid reliability of what it intends to do. PacificCorp will now try to provide this evidence through several open cases before Utah regulators.

"For Utah, economics is king," Holman said. He means that the commission is likely to be swayed by the argument that renewables are the most affordable option, and that PacifiCorp simply needs to make its case more thoroughly.

Oregon, Washington State and California all have state laws that set out timetables for complete elimination of fossil fuels from their electricity systems.

The laws mean that PacifiCorp needs to shift how it allocates costs for coal-fired power plants to a system where Utah, Idaho and Wyoming probably would need to cover all the costs.

If Utah's commission decides that the cost of coal power is too high and agrees with PacifiCorp's proposal to close most of the plants, there is little that Idaho or Wyoming could do to keep the plants open, Holman said.

He frames this as a simple question: "Does Utah want to invest more in coal or not?"

I'll be following this process as it unfolds in several states and will let you know what happens.

Credit: Pacific Power/Flickr

What Can We Do Now to Avoid a Mountain of Solar Power Waste Later?

Finding a way to effectively recycle solar panels is going to be essential to avoid having to bury tons of electronic waste.

Researchers lay out the challenges and possible solutions in a paper published this week in the journal Nature Energy.

First some good news, before I get to the bitter medicine: Solar panels last about 30 years, so we have some time to figure out recycling before the current boom in solar development leads to an equivalent increase in waste.

There are now fewer than one million tons of waste worldwide from photovoltaic panels, which makes this a negligible share of the world's electronic waste. But this total is going to surge, with projections that it will hit a cumulative total of eight million tons by 2030 and 80 million tons by 2050, the paper says.

"It would be a shame, both for the industry and for society and the planet, to

lose all those materials, to be buried into a landfill," said Garvin Heath, a senior scientist at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and lead author of the paper.

At stake is the very idea of photovoltaic panels as clean energy.

"The PV industry, as an industry that is viewed by the public and policymakers as a clean energy technology, I think has an implicit promise that it ought to be clean or at least attempt to be clean in as many ways as possible," Heath said.

Indeed, groups that traffic in climate denial like to bring up the waste that eventually will be left over from renewable energy projects as a reason to be skeptical of solar, wind and battery storage.

But Heath has some solutions, or at least suggestions for how we get on a path toward solutions. The paper says governments and the solar industry should invest in research and development that focuses on how to get the most value out of recycling solar panels, and how to make it so that the cost of recycling is about the same or less than the cost of putting old panels in a landfill.

The way to accomplish this is to develop ways to reuse the valuable materials in the panels, such as silicon.

Silicon that has been sitting in the elements for decades will accumulate impurities that make it difficult to reuse in new solar panels that have high purity requirements. But researchers may be able to develop ways to remove those impurities.

Solar panel manufacturers may be able to use some of the materials from retired panels to make new solar panels. But, the paper says, the reuse of the materials for other industries might yield more value.

As is often the case with clean energy, Europe is several steps ahead of the United States, with mandates requiring recycling of some solar components. Germany collected 553 tons of solar materials in 2017, the most in Europe.

Companies in Europe are responding to the recycling rules by setting up businesses to meet demand. But there is a long way to go, and much of the work is done by businesses that specialize in other types of recycling and are not necessarily well-suited to getting the most value from old solar panels,

Heath said.

The point is that now is the time to be thinking about solar recycling, before we have mountains of waste.

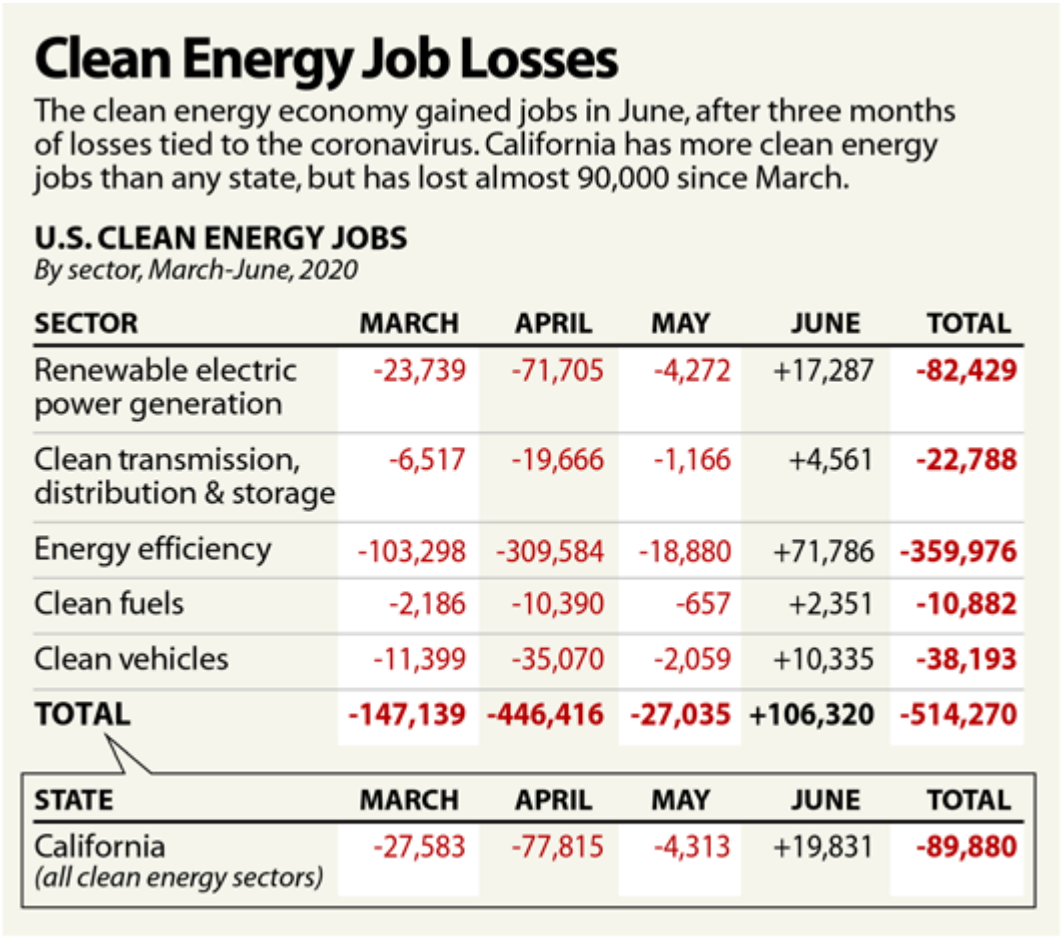
Credit: Terry O'Rourke/NREL

Clean Energy Jobs Rebound Slightly from Covid Bust, But Still Way Down

The clean energy economy has regained some of the jobs it lost in the spring to the coronavirus. But we are, tragically, nowhere near a recovery.

U.S. clean energy industries gained 106,320 jobs in June, following three months of job losses, according to a report by BW Research Partnership. After the gains in June, the net loss since March is 514,270 jobs. The report looked at jobs in renewable electric power generation; energy efficiency; clean vehicles, clean fuels and “clean transmission, distribution and energy storage.”

California, the state with the most clean energy jobs, had the largest increase, with 19,800 jobs, or 5 percent of the state’s clean energy workforce, returning in June. But the state remains deep in a hole, with a cumulative loss of 89,881 jobs, or 16 percent, since March.



Clean Energy Job Losses

The clean energy economy gained jobs in June, after three months of losses tied to the coronavirus. California has more clean energy jobs than any state, but has lost almost 90,000 since March.

U.S. CLEAN ENERGY JOBS
By sector, March-June, 2020

SECTOR	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	TOTAL
Renewable electric power generation	-23,739	-71,705	-4,272	+17,287	**-82,429**
Clean transmission, distribution & storage	-6,517	-19,666	-1,166	+4,561	**-22,788**
Energy efficiency	-103,298	-309,584	-18,880	+71,786	**-359,976**
Clean fuels	-2,186	-10,390	-657	+2,351	**-10,882**
Clean vehicles	-11,399	-35,070	-2,059	+10,335	**-38,193**
TOTAL	**-147,139**	**-446,416**	**-27,035**	**+106,320**	**-514,270**

STATE	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	TOTAL
California *(all clean energy sectors)*	-27,583	-77,815	-4,313	+19,831	**-89,880**

SOURCE: BW Research Partnership PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

Viewed in isolation, the job gains in this report may seem like good news. But it's obvious from headlines across the country that the virus is far from contained. Also, some of the jobs in June were tied to the federal government's Paycheck Protection Program, a short-term stimulus with a limited shelf life.

"The outlook is not that rosy right now," said Bob Keefe, executive director of Environmental Entrepreneurs, a trade group of clean energy businesses that is a co-sponsor of the jobs survey. He is based in the San Diego area.

"The overall economic uncertainty is putting a crimp in people wanting to do utility-scale wind and solar projects," he said. "It's causing the finance of clean energy, and the finance of any project, to remain questionable."

The continuing increase in Covid-19 cases is leading some cities and states to reimpose rules to limit the spread of the virus.

The recovery of the clean energy jobs market is tied to questions of how long the surge in virus cases lasts, and whether the government passes additional

legislation to encourage clean energy spending.

Forecasters are trying to figure out what Covid-19 means for the clean energy economy, with ever-changing numbers about solar and wind development and electric vehicle sales.

Indeed, the ups and downs of the virus show the folly of trying to make forecasts right now.

Credit: Dennis Schroeder/NREL

Speaking of Clean Energy Jobs… Training Program for Ex-Inmates Gets a Boost

Last month, I wrote about an online seminar held by GRID Alternatives to discuss diversification of the clean energy workforce. The Oakland-based nonprofit trains low-income workers and formerly incarcerated people for jobs in the solar industry.

Now the organization has some extra resources. The U.S. Department of Labor awarded $2.3 million last week to a GRID affiliate, GRID Alternatives Central Valley, which manages training programs and solar installations for underserved communities in Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and Kern counties.

The grant was one of 20 awarded across the country through a Department of Labor program that aims to help people who have served time and are now looking for jobs.

For Grid Alternatives Central Valley, the money will help to expand programs, including a three-year-old vocational training program at the Madera County Department of Corrections that gives inmates basic hands-on experience in solar. GRID is planning to link this program to others that provide services when participants are reentering the job market.

“When (trainees) come out, they not only are going to continue seeing the same people that they saw behind the wall, but they're getting a whole additional level of support to see them be successful,” said Karina Gonzalez, workforce development director for the Central Valley affiliate. Incarcerated

participants can choose to continue training with GRID following their release.

“We believe we can get our trainees to grow their skills louder than their background,” she said. “When skills speak to employers, that's when we start bridging these gaps to employment.”

Reporter Nicole Pollack contributed to this story.

Inside Clean Energy is ICN’s weekly bulletin of news and analysis about the energy transition. Send news tips and questions to dan.gearino@insideclimatenews.org.

Go Deeper

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- The Wood Pellet Business is Booming. Scientists Say That’s Not Good for the Climate.
- Biden’s $2 Trillion Climate Plan Promotes Union Jobs, Electric Cars and Carbon-Free Power

PublicService Commission <psc@utah.gov>

17-035-61

1 message

Benjamin Peterson <benjamindanielpeterson@gmail.com> Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 4:51 PM
To: psc@utah.gov

Dear Utah Public Service Commission,

You should reject RMP's plan. The proposed changes to net metering are not in the best interest of Utah families and businesses. Thousands of Utah jobs will be lost and Utah's unmatched lands will suffer if the PSC approves RMP's plan. It decreases access, availability, and affordability of residential solar. There must be a cost-benefit study performed by a neutral third party to inform you of the TRUE costs and benefits of solar interconnection. There are many many negative externalities to the way power is distributed today. Any environmental economics examination will give a better picture of what to consider when making a decision such as this.

Please do the right thing. We are all counting on you.

Ben