

Comments to the Energy Planning Advisory Board for the Stakeholder Forum,
June 23, 2006

Submitted for the New Hampshire Sierra Club
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["The purpose of the forum is to identify key energy issues for Legislative and Executive action in order to combat in the present the effects of dramatic increases in energy costs and to develop for the future a state energy policy premised on the fundamental goals of security, affordability and sustainability."]

The New Hampshire Sierra Club has always advocated for energy conservation. We divide our comments here into two parts. The first deals with present and near term measures to address current increases in energy costs. The second part makes recommendations for a state energy policy with the goals of energy security, affordability, and sustainability.

All of our recommendations target the goals mentioned above. It is nevertheless true that all of these policy recommendations carry extensive benefits beyond energy cost, security, and sustainability. In every case there are the additional benefits associated with reducing the many kinds of air pollution, curbing global warming through reduced emission of greenhouse gases, and promotion of high quality manufacturing jobs.

Part 1. Legislative and Executive action to combat the effects of current increases in energy costs.

It is unfortunate that most public policy initiatives can address long term energy improvement but not near term problems. However, there are ways to save public and private money spent on energy immediately. Public policy can be effective.

- Conservation

In the short term, energy savings are most available through conservation. State policy can promote or require conservation practices and energy-conserving products. These include:

- Efficient Lighting

Fluorescent lighting for both businesses and homes creates immediate and large energy and, therefore, money, savings. Compact fluorescent bulbs are now greatly reduced in price and improved in style, versatility, and availability. Public policy can encourage efficient lighting by example or through public service advertising. Policy can also mandate efficient lighting, as has been done in California. Of course, public agencies themselves can be required to transition beginning immediately to efficient lighting.

- Street Lighting and Traffic Lights

Municipalities have begun to convert street lights and traffic lights to LED lighting. The savings are major. Policy can require cities and towns to make this transition.

- Appliances

When office appliances and machinery expire, they should be replaced with only energy-efficient units. This can be mandated for the state as a consumer.

- Insulation and Weatherproofing

Insulation, sealing cracks, etc. make a significant difference in energy use. Policy can make funds more broadly available for residential improvement or to subsidize materials. Existing public buildings must be brought up to optimal levels of insulation and "tightening." This can be mandated at the executive level.

- Travel

Immediate savings are possible if public agencies transition to fuel-efficient vehicle fleets, whether hybrid, diesel, or smaller vehicles. This can be done on a replacement basis. The state can facilitate pooling of purchases to obtain advantageous fleet discounts for the state as well as local governments.

- Vehicles (other than transportation policy)

Anti-idling for vehicles can be mandated/enforced, saving fuel.

Part 2. Legislative and Executive action to develop for the future a state energy policy premised on the fundamental goals of security, affordability, and sustainability.

All of the measures mentioned in Part 1 would also have long-term benefits for the future. In addition, there are other actions that focus primarily in the longer term.

Energy conservation promises the greatest savings in money and demand for energy. Note too that alternative fuels and energy sources increase our energy diversity and security while promising major gains in sustainability.

Simultaneously, we reduce both the health impact of air pollution and the emission of greenhouse gases that will spell catastrophe for the state and nation if left unchecked.

- New Hampshire, like many other states, can establish MPG/CAFE requirements higher than present inadequate federal levels.

This would lessen demand for petroleum based fuels and public and personal expenditures on fuel.

- Adopt a Renewable Energy Standard.

This would mandate that a set percent of electric energy sold in New Hampshire would have to come from renewable energy sources. This reduces dependence on imported foreign oil. Results would be greater energy and geopolitical security, as well as diversity of fuel types and less vulnerability to unstable regimes and energy market volatility and manipulation.

- Simplify siting of alternative electric generation facilities such as wind and solar.

These are energy sources that can be implemented quickly, and that protect us from foreign suppliers and foreign and domestic speculators.

- Electric Deregulation.

Adopt policy initiatives that make the promise of deregulation into a reality. Open New Hampshire markets to genuine competition so that citizens can benefit from the expected decrease in prices.

- Promote "green," energy-efficient building codes.

National models already exist.

- Endorse cutting-edge waste-to-energy practices, such as sludge and septage bioreactors that are clean-burning and produce a substantial outflow of green energy.

The technology is available. As a side benefit, disposing of sludge would no longer need to damage soils.