



NEW JERSEY CHAPTER

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NJ Board of Public Utilities
Energy Master Plan
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NJ Sierra Club Comments RE: Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure

Today the New Jersey Sierra Club is attending the final New Jersey Energy Master Plan (EMP) meeting on Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure. **New Jersey Sierra Club Director Jeff Tittel released the following statement:**

“We will never get to 100% renewable energy without a moratorium on natural gas power plants and stopping all new natural gas infrastructure. There are also 5 new proposed natural gas power plants like the one in the Meadowlands. The proposed powerplants in New Jersey will emit over 5 million metric tons of greenhouse gases into our air. There are also 7 natural gas projects like PennEast underway that could destroy sensitive ecosystems harming wildlife and public safety. Replacing dangerous old gas mains and laterals in people’s home makes sense but not new pipeline distribution systems.

“The DEP can stop fossil fuel infrastructure because the department has the authority to regulate greenhouse gases and carbon and deny air permitting and Title V permits.

The Department’s determination is based on compelling scientific evidence of existing and projected adverse impacts due to climate change on the environment, ecosystems, wildlife, human health, and enjoyment of property in the State. The BPU also has the authority to regulate GHG’s and deny projects that increase GHG’s. We can’t get to 100% renewable unless we scale down our greenhouse gas emissions until we reach zero.

“BPU must use smart grid technology so we use distributive generation using microgrids. Microgrids especially help protect us against blackouts. We also need to make updates to the grid so the next time a storm comes, we can use stored energy to prevent power outages. We need to be able to store renewable energy at all times, like at night or when the wind isn’t blowing. Energy storage is critical to move renewable energy forward and prevent blackouts and brownouts. We need smarter and smaller distribution grids too.

“Our utilities must undertake major resiliency updates like in the wake of all the extreme weather events we have experienced, but to fund them responsibly. We need to replace existing laterals for local distribution of gas and oil in towns. This should include replacing older and vulnerable lines and putting lines underground to prevent blackouts in the first place. Some of these lines fall down every year. Every time a line goes down, the companies make more money fixing the line rather than redoing it underground where it would be safer. They get at least 14% return on emergency repairs and can charge overtime. They also get a 12% return on so-called resiliency projects. They won’t make this kind of money if the lines are underground which are only about an 8% profit. The utilities failed to protect



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the power lines and electrical infrastructure in the first place and are now rebuilding key infrastructure in the same vulnerable areas.

“We need a long-term solution to reduce development in the most flood prone areas, address stormwater, and implement a holistic approach with green infrastructure and buyouts. Buyouts are important because they open up waterfront for more public use, bike paths, parks, and walkways. They also protect areas during the storm because they offer flood storage and help protect surrounding properties. With storms getting worse, it is critical that the Murphy Administration reverse Christie’s rollbacks to prevent future flooding near our coast and put in place stronger protections. They need get rid of weakened versions of important water rules like the Flood Hazard Rules, Water Quality Management and Planning Rules, CAFRA, Wetlands, and Stormwater Management Rules.

“We must move forward on legislation that would help people receive funding for resiliency projects. Legislation like, **S1611 (Smith)**, also known as PACE, puts in place a funding mechanism to allow homeowners to finance projects such as solar and renewable energy, stormwater and to make their homes more flood resistant. This allows people to use green building techniques, energy efficiency, and cleaning up stormwater, and it makes our communities more resilient and sustainable. This allows homeowners to get low cost loans and repay them with a small assessment on their property.

“BPU needs to update and fix our water system infrastructure. We have incidents of contaminated drinking water across the state, especially in places like Newark, Paterson, and Camden. This is at least a \$8 billion problem that needs to be fixed immediately to keep the lead out of our schools. Whether it’s old pipes leaking out water or contaminates like lead threatening our children, it’s time for real action to protect our drinking water supply and infrastructure. BPU must update filtration systems and buy land to protect water sources. Most importantly, we need to come up with long-term plans that include long-term funding sources.

“New Jersey must fix its combined sewer overflow problem because it is a health hazard, especially when concerned with sea level rise. You would think that when it rains our water would be cleaner but instead it becomes dirtier. Only 5% of streams in New Jersey meet standards for being fishable, swimmable, and drinkable, mostly because of non-point solution. 65% of our streams are impacted by phosphorus. Dilapidated storm water systems exacerbate the problem by increasing the water in combined sewers and we need funding to reduce the amount of water in sewers during major storm events. We need at least \$13 billion just to fix our combined sewer overflow systems, but overall, we need more than \$45 billion to fix our water and sewage infrastructure.

“Building a more sustainable and resilient infrastructure will not only help reduce our greenhouse gases but improve our economy in doing so. New Jersey can improve pollution prevention, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and be resilient to climate change and sea level rise if the BPU starts now. New Jersey must be prepared for the next big storm because they are happening more frequently and in higher frequency. The BPU must move forward with renewable energy and block dirty fossil fuels from continuing to infiltrate our state.”