

Press Release from North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, the Sierra Club, and the Southern Environmental Law Center

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Clean energy advocates react to Duke Energy's proposed Carbon Plan

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.—Several groups involved in the North Carolina Utilities Commission proceeding to develop a state plan to reduce heat-trapping carbon emissions from electricity generation—known as the Carbon Plan—reacted to a proposed plan filed today by Duke Energy. A state law enacted last year tasks the utilities commission with developing a plan to reduce carbon emissions from power plants in North Carolina by 70% from 2005 levels by 2030, and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, with input from Duke Energy and stakeholders.

Interested parties now have 60 days to file critiques of Duke's plan or their own alternative plans, and the commission must finalize a Carbon Plan by the end of this year. A coalition of advocacy groups—the Natural Resources Defense Council, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, and the Sierra Club, represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center, along with the North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association—commissioned expert analysis of the proposed Duke plan that will be filed along with an alternative plan on July 15. The groups' initial reactions to Duke's proposed Carbon Plan follow.

Gudrun Thompson, a senior attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center, said "Duke Energy's filing of its proposed Carbon Plan today is just the beginning of an important process. We'll review Duke's plan with our experts and propose an alternative plan that will achieve our state's carbon-reduction goals at least cost to ratepayers by rapidly phasing out expensive, polluting fossil fuels, ramping up clean renewable energy, and maximizing low-cost energy efficiency—all while centering equity and environmental justice."

Peter Ledford, director of policy & general counsel with the NC Sustainable Energy Association, said: "While we have yet to fully digest the details of the plan filed today by Duke Energy, we hope this filing kicks off a collaborative process led by the NC Utilities Commission to outline a roadmap to reach the legislatively mandated carbon reduction goals. We may not agree on all the details included in the modeling to reach these goals but are optimistic that this process will lead to a cleaner electricity sector and more jobs across the state."

Dave Rogers, Southeast deputy regional director for Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign said: "North Carolinians deserve a carbon plan grounded in the urgency of the climate crisis, centered on 100% clean, renewable energy, and that prioritizes public health and safety above lining utility shareholders' pockets. We can't accept any Carbon Plan scenario that falsely bulks up the cost of clean energy resources to justify slow-walking coal retirements, or building fracked gas plants that will leave Tar Heel families on the hook for billions in stranded costs as these polluting facilities rapidly become obsolete and gas prices continue to be volatile. As the final decision now turns to state regulators, we hope commission members will be able to assure communities that their health and safety will be at the forefront of the process every step of the way."

Maggie Shober, research director at Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, said, "When it comes to reducing carbon pollution while avoiding potential utility boondoggles, it is important that we don't hamper near-term investments in proven strategies like energy efficiency and solar. Duke's Carbon Plan proposal is but one data point in the Commission's process for determining how to achieve legislatively mandated carbon reductions. We look forward to presenting the Commission with an alternative plan that could reduce emissions while avoiding risky investments in new fossil-fuel infrastructure."

Luis Martinez, senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC): "We are approaching the culmination of a process that began years ago to transition North Carolina to a clean energy economy and address climate change. Duke's proposed plan will be one input for the final plan, as will be the plan proposed by NRDC and our partners later this summer. But by the end of 2022, it will be up to the NC Utilities Commission to ensure that we meet the goals of HB951. The exhaustive analysis completed by all stakeholders to date has repeatedly concluded that the best path forward for consumers and the climate is one that prioritizes energy efficiency, wind, solar and battery storage."

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About the North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association

North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) is the leading 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that drives public policy and market development for clean energy. NCSEA's work enables clean energy jobs, economic opportunities, and affordable energy options for all North Carolinians. Learn more about NCSEA, its mission, and vision at www.energync.org

About the Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with millions of members and supporters. In addition to protecting every person's right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.

About the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

Since 1985, the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy has worked to promote responsible and equitable energy choices to ensure clean, safe, and healthy communities throughout the Southeast. Learn more at www.cleanenergy.org

About the Southern Environmental Law Center

The Southern Environmental Law Center is one of the nation's most powerful defenders of the environment, rooted in the South. With a long track record, SELC takes on the toughest environmental challenges in court, in government, and in our communities to protect our region's air, water, climate, wildlife, lands, and people. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the organization has a staff of 170, including 90 attorneys, and is headquartered in Charlottesville, Va., with offices in Asheville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Chapel Hill, Charleston, Nashville, Richmond, and Washington, D.C.
www.southernenvironment.org