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MAINE CLIMATE, ENERGY, ECONOMY EXPERTS VOICE SUPPORT FOR CLEAN POWER PLAN

Explain how Maine is well-positioned to benefit from the plan

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Maine – Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its final Clean Power Plan to combat climate change. In response, Maine experts in climate, energy, and the economy, voiced their support for the plan on a telephone briefing, and called on local, state, and national leaders to do the same. They explained why the Clean Power Plan is good news for the health of Maine people, our economy and our environment; boosts energy security, and rewards Maine for the state’s previous action to address climate pollution.

The EPA’s Clean Power Plan sets the first ever federal limits on the carbon pollution that comes from existing power plants and causes climate change. The plan, which encourages investments in clean energy and energy efficiency, is designed to achieve a 32% reduction in power-plant carbon pollution by 2030. The plan explicitly builds on an [existing policy in Maine and the Northeast, known as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#), or RGGI, which already sets a limit on carbon pollution from power plants.

“Maine has suffered in many ways from coal-burning power plants to our south and west,” says Charles Colgan, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy and Planning at USM, currently, Director of Research for the Center for the Blue Economy, and former state economist of Maine. “From an economics perspective, those regions have been burning cheap dirty coal, while we foot the pollution bill and struggle to compete. [The Clean Power Plan helps level the playing field, because Maine has already taken major actions to clean up our power supply](#). Maine people should not have to pay the price for cheap coal power produced elsewhere. It is good news for anyone who cares about Maine’s competitiveness.”

The Clean Power Plan provides considerable flexibility to states to develop strategies to meet the pollution reduction targets, including through regional cooperation. A recent analysis from the Union of Concerned Scientists identified Maine as one of 14 states (including all nine of the RGGI states) on track to surpass Clean Power Plan pollution targets for 2020. (See attachment.) Maine has considerable clean energy resources, such as wind, solar, hydro and ocean renewables, which create local jobs and energy security. [All of this puts Maine at a competitive advantage](#) as the Clean Power Plan is implemented across the nation.

“As a farmer who has been producing maple syrup and growing hay for decades, I have already observed negative changes in the climate,” says Russell Black, a farmer and Maine state representative (R-Wilton). “If we want to hand the Maine we grew up with to our kids, whether we’re farmers or not, we need to take smart actions to prevent climate change from getting far worse. I’m proud of the bipartisan solutions Maine has adopted that help our economy while reducing pollution.”

One such solution is RGGI, the nation’s first regional program that cuts carbon pollution, and has done so while our regions’ economies have continued to grow. RGGI is best known in Maine for generating significant funding for energy efficiency programs provided by Efficiency Maine. RGGI provides almost all of the funding used for Efficiency Maine’s Home Energy Savings Program, which last year helped more than 10,000 Maine homes with energy efficiency improvements that reduce heating bills. It also provides energy efficiency grants that help large energy users – such as paper mills, hospitals, and manufacturers – cut energy bills and increase competitiveness. [According to a recent independent analysis, RGGI has provided a large net boost to the](#)

[regional and state economy—an increase of \\$215 million to Maine’s overall economy](#) over the last six years—largely as a result of substantial savings on business and residential energy bills. (See attachment.)

“Over the last 6 years, energy users in Maine and the Northeast have derived very significant benefits from participating in RGGI,” said Steve Ward, a former Public Advocate for Maine. “This is particularly the case for large businesses seeking to cut their energy bills through increased efficiency and for low income residents striving to reduce their dependence on heating oil. For all these reasons the Clean Power Plan is good news for Maine consumers. If we consider our energy and climate challenge to be a 28-mile marathon, the RGGI states have put themselves at mile 20, while other states are just starting the race.”

“The Clean Power Plan is great news for Maine on so many different levels,” said Dylan Voorhees, Clean Energy Director for the Natural Resources Council of Maine. “It will ensure that other states join us and do their part to address climate change before it takes too great a toll on our economy, our health and our way of life. Maine has taken bold, effective action; these national limits on carbon pollution are way overdue.”

“Maine is a state with everything to gain under the Clean Power Plan,” said Taryn Hallweaver, director of Environment Maine. “Our state is rich in renewable energy resources, and the industry is poised to grow under the plan. We’re downwind of coal-fired power plants that are going to be cleaned up, meaning we’ll breathe easier. And the plan is a critical step forward in slowing the climate change that is acidifying our oceans and changing our weather patterns. It’s a win-win-win.”

Power plants are the largest source of carbon pollution in the U.S., particularly coal-fired power plants located to Maine’s west and south. Maine has long struggled with the effects of pollution from out-of-state upwind sources, which includes carbon pollution that is changing our climate.

“We are extremely pleased that our nation is finally poised to set common sense limits on carbon pollution from power plants,” said Dr. Marguerite Pennoyer, a Scarborough physician and member of the Maine board of the American Lung Association. “There is no question that the Clean Power Plan will have a tremendous impact on the health of Maine children and adults for generations to come. That’s because reducing carbon pollution may be the single best thing we can do – the lowest hanging fruit – in our efforts to lessen [the health impacts of climate change](#). The Clean Power Plan is a prescription for less ozone, less pollen, and healthier air for all of us.”

“The Clean Power Plan presents Maine with the ability to protect our communities by cutting the dangerous power plant pollution that triggers asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature deaths,” said Beth Ahearn, political director for the Maine Conservation Alliance. “The EPA’s Clean Power Plan is a clear and sensible path forward. Mainers have only to gain from these new carbon pollution standards, which were designed with flexibility for states to develop individual plans that play to our existing economic strengths and unique circumstances.”

The Clean Power Plan faces sharp and well-funded opposition from corporate polluters in other regions and their allies in Washington, DC, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), who have vowed to try to thwart the plan in Congress and in court. McConnell, whose state is a leading producer of coal and generates more than 90% of its power from the dirty fuel, has also urged Governors to refuse to comply with the plan.

Although the Clean Power Plan is already authorized by Congress under the Clean Air Act, the Senate can vote explicitly to repeal the rule. Congress can also severely undermine it through budget bills or amendments to other bills, a strategy that clean power opponents employed as recently as June when an amendment to make the rule voluntary was attached to the appropriations bill for the Department of the Interior. As an influential member of the Republican-controlled Senate, as well as a member of the Appropriations Committee, Maine’s Senator Susan Collins will play a key role in votes on the Clean Power Plan.

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