

Support 100 Percent Renewable Electricity by 2030

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In response to calls from residents and elected officials of Fort Collins, Longmont, Loveland, and Estes Park to move toward 100 percent renewable electricity, Platte River Power Authority (PRPA) developed and released a "Zero Net Carbon Portfolio Analysis" late last year. The study provides a road map for how PRPA might provide electricity to its four owner communities that would produce zero net carbon, or ZNC emissions by 2030.

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) views PRPA's study as an important step in the right direction. However, that study does not meet our goal, which is shared by our nine allied organizations in the four communities served by the PRPA, of 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030.

Instead, the study envisions replacing the Rawhide coal-fired power plant with a similarly sized gas-fired plant in 2030. The gas-fired plant would generate approximately 25 percent of the electricity used by the PRPA's owner communities. New wind turbines and solar arrays would also be built, producing more electricity than is needed by PRPA's owner communities. The excess wind- and solar-generated electricity would then be sold to other utilities. The carbon emissions from the gas-fired plant would be offset by those sales, hence the "net" in the ZNC moniker.

Building a new gas-fired plant in 2030 would be a bad choice for at least two reasons. First, although natural gas burns more cleanly than coal, it still produces significant quantities of carbon dioxide when used to generate electricity.

Second, extracting and transporting natural gas results in the leakage of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Documented methane leakage rates suggest that using natural gas to generate electricity does more damage to the climate than does using coal.

FCSG and our allies in Longmont, Loveland, and Estes Park have commissioned two reviews of PRPA's ZNC study. The first is available on our website [here](#). We encourage readers of the Coloradoan to look at that review and to urge members of City Council to support 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030; not gas-generated electricity offset by renewable energy sales.

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