

# The PRPA Needs to Get Serious About Renewable Energy

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The Platte River Power Authority (PRPA) - which supplies power to Fort Collins, Loveland, Longmont, and Estes Park - is currently engaged in a "Customized Resource Planning" process in which they will develop cost estimates for a range of renewable energy "portfolios." Those portfolios range from adding 25 Megawatts (MW) of new wind capacity to their existing power generation portfolio at the low end to adding 100 MW of new wind and 200 MW of new solar photovoltaics (PV) at the high end. Even at the high end, this is far less than what's needed to get anywhere close to 100% renewables by 2035. The PRPA needs to do much better.

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group urges people to write to members of the Fort Collins City Council asking them to ask the PRPA to include a 100% renewable option by 2030 or 2035 in their study. Here is an example of what you might write:

Dear Councilmember XX -

I would like to see the City of Fort Collins move toward obtaining 100% of its electricity from renewable resources by 2030 or 2035 at the latest. I understand that the Platte River Power Authority (PRPA) is currently studying how electric rates would be impacted by increasing the amount of wind and solar in the utility's generation mix. Please ask the PRPA to include a 100% renewable option by 2030 or 2035 in their study.

Sincerely,

Your Name and Your Address

Councilmember contact information may be found here: <http://www.fcgov.com/council/>. Please note that Mayor Wade Troxell and Mayor Pro Tem Gerry Horak both serve on the PRPA Board of Directors.

More background information on the PRPA renewables study is provided below.

1. The PRPA is currently engaged in a "Customized Resource Planning" process in which they will develop cost estimates for a range of renewable energy "portfolios."

a. Those portfolios range from adding 25 Megawatts (MW) of new wind capacity to their existing power generation portfolio at the low end to adding 100 MW of new wind and 200 MW of new solar photovoltaics (PV) at the high end. Taking into account "capacity factors," the added average power would be significantly less than the peak powers indicated here.

b. The existing portfolio consists mostly of fossil fuel based generation capacity: 78% coal and natural gas, and 22% hydro, wind, and solar.

c. The PRPA does not plan to retire any of its coal-fired generators until 2025 – and plans to keep its largest coal-fired generator running until 2046.

2. We would like to see the Customized Resource Planning process include a much more ambitious renewable portfolio: 100% renewables by 2030, or by 2035 at the latest.

a. This would allow each city to see what energy costs and other benefits would be if it were to obtain 100% of its electric power from renewable resources.

b. In addition to wind turbines and solar PV, the study should consider purchases from other utilities and also other energy generation or storage technologies (such as solar thermal, geothermal, batteries, molten salts, hydrogen, or compressed air) to meet the 100% renewable target.

c. Other cities that have committed to take advantage of the economic, societal, and environmental benefits of 100% clean renewable energy include: Greensburg, KS (2013 achieved), Burlington, VT (2014 achieved), Aspen, CO (2015 achieved), Georgetown, TX (by 2017), East Hampton, NY (by 2020), Grand Rapids, MI (by 2020), San Jose, CA (by 2022), Boulder, CO (by 2030), San Francisco, CA (by 2030), Rochester, MN (by 2031), Moab, UT (by 2032), San Diego, CA (by 2035), and Pueblo, CO (by 2035).

3. Studying – and ultimately moving forward with - a 100% renewable portfolio would provide the following benefits:

a. Lowered costs for consumers, as renewable energy (especially solar and wind) have decreased dramatically in price in recent years, and can now be less expensive than coal when employed at utility scales.

b. Reduced contribution of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane, allowing Northern Colorado to do its part in combating global climate change. Currently, the PRPA derives more than

twice the national average of its electricity production from burning coal, and it releases millions of tons of new CO2 into our atmosphere each year. Scientific evidence has shown conclusively that the CO2 in our atmosphere is higher than at any prior time in the last 3 million years, that the added CO2 comes primarily from burning of fossil fuels like coal, and that the added CO2 is causing harmful global warming and climate change.

c. Health benefits resulting from less pollution and climate change. It is well documented that global warming and climate change disproportionately harm children, women, and economically disadvantaged people.

d. Employment and business opportunities resulting from developing and deploying renewable and storage technologies. In recent years, good jobs in the renewable energy sector have far outpaced those in the fossil fuels or nuclear sectors; and mitigating climate change in Northern Colorado will produce significant economic advantages from tourism as well.

4. Initial results of the Customized Resource Planning study are expected in June of this year. If necessary, we urge the PRPA to extend this deadline in order to include a 100% renewables portfolio so that its owner cities have information they need to move forward to a 100% clean renewable electricity future by the 2030-2035 time frame.