

Spring 2023 Newsletter



WHAT'S NEW

RATE CASE CONCLUDES

The PSC recently concluded its hearings on the rate case and will soon be coming out with a decision that will affect 400,000 Montanans. 350 Montana, represented by Monica Tranel (right) was an intervenor. The PSC is supposed to represent the interests of ratepayers, but instead backs NorthWestern Energy, our monopoly utility. 350 Montana continues to fight NWE's investment in fossil fuels and rate hikes for residential consumers.



PEOPLE VS. FOSSIL FUELS + 350 NETWORK COUNCIL COLLABORATION

In 2022, 350 Montana was brought into the national People vs Fossil Fuels coalition by the 350 Network Council. Through this collaboration, we received a capacity-building grant that allowed us to hire our first staff person and expand our activism. We now participate in a weekly working group, host national distributed days of action, and strive to inform Montanans about national climate issues.

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GET INVOLVED: EPA PROPOSES INCREASED POLLUTION REGULATIONS

If you're a climate hawk –and we hope you are—you were probably surprised and maybe angry that NorthWestern Energy has decided to take ownership of the Colstrip plants and has pledged to keep them running, pouring out 10 million tons a year of CO2 until 2045.

This is completely irresponsible at a time when Montana climate scientist Cathy Whitock testified last week that frequent drought, wildfires, and major flood events, already costly, will get much worse if we don't cut greenhouse gas emissions.

But, there's some good news on the horizon. The EPA recently proposed **increased pollution regulations** that may force NorthWestern to abandon Colstrip. **NorthWestern's lawyers took the unprecedented step of lobbying the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) to oppose these new emissions standards.** The company doesn't want to invest in proven pollution-control technology that will cut mercury pollution by 90 percent.

Here's where you come in. The EPA is taking comments on the proposal until Friday, June 23. It will only take a minute.

1. Send an email to a-and-r-docket@epa.gov with the subject heading Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2018-0794.
2. Tell them who you are, where you live, and why you support the EPA's proposed Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) in Coal- and Oil-Fired Electric Utility Steam Generating Units.
3. If you want to go further, tell the EPA that it's time Montana's major polluter, the coal-burning plants, Units 3 and 4, at Colstrip, Montana, meet modern MATS standards because these air pollutants are known to cause cancer and are suspected of causing birth defects. The EPA is right to enforce stricter health standards because effective technology is affordable and available.
4. These plants have a long history of exceeding EPA's mercury and air toxic standards. For instance, in 2019, the plants' owner had to shut them down because of their MATS pollution. In the second quarter of 2018, Unit 3 was 143 percent higher than acceptable levels and unit 4 was 170 percent. The plants exceeded limits for particulate matter - or toxic dust - by 16 to 36 percent for almost 80 days, and their owner paid a \$450,000 fine.
5. Back in 2011 the report, **"Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health: Mercury,"** found that the Colstrip plants emitted 1,490 pounds of mercury each year. These plants were the worst polluters in the West and ranked the 11th largest polluter in the nation.

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HELD VS. MONTANA TRIAL BEGINS



16 youths are suing the state of Montana for their constitutional right to a healthy environment. This is the first ever constitutional climate trial in the U.S. The trial began on June 12 and will end sometime this week. You can read updates [here](#).

The trial is based on **Article II, Section 3** of the Montana Constitution, which includes "the right to a clean and healthful environment" and **Article IX, Section 1** which states that "the state and each person shall maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment in Montana for present and future generations."

LEGISLATIVE NEWS: HOUSE BILL 971 IS PASSED AND SIGNED

House Bill 971 was signed by Governor Gianforte in May, and will have devastating impacts on climate in Montana. This bill prevents state agencies from analyzing and considering the impacts of climate change or greenhouse gases when reviewing large construction projects. More than 1000 Montanans submitted public testimony for HB 971 during the legislative session, over 95% of which were in opposition to the bill.

You can read the full text of the bill [here](#).

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WHAT IS CLIMATE RESILICENCY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This corner of the newsletter has two goals: to share climate resilience resources and to create a space where stories can be nurtured and shared.

The [IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#) defines climate resilience as follows: "Resilience [...] is defined as the capacity of social, economic and ecosystems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure as well as biodiversity in case of ecosystems while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation."

And [The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions](#) says, this: "Resilience is an increasingly common word in the climate change vernacular. Extreme weather events have shown that resilience is an essential component of any comprehensive climate action program because climate change is a global, as well as a hyper-local and personal issue. The causes and the broad impacts affect everyone on the planet. Resilience efforts must be executed at the asset, neighborhood, and individual level."

We know innately how this works in the physical world. For example, in a Montana Public Radio story covering the [Denton Fire](#), Denton resident Josh Poser describes rebuilding the home he lost in the fire to be more fire resistant. He and his family desire to stay in Denton so they are bouncing back, building resilience into their major asset by incorporating fire resistant materials.

This local level of resilience in the physical world prompts two questions:

1) How does a person who has lost their house, forest, cold-water fishery, crops, etc. due to catastrophic climate events motivate themselves to take action and join the fight to end the burning of fossil fuels? [The Washington Post](#) reports that more than 40 percent of Americans live in counties hit by climate disasters and 80 percent have experienced heat waves. Are they thinking about climate resiliency? This community of experience could be valuable to help steer the good ship America, which has generated the most greenhouse gases of any nation, toward a more secure future. What is inhibiting Josh Poser and others who've experienced a climate disaster from coming forward and helping to lead the resistance to fossil fuel hegemony. How does climate resiliency help us work on the personal level in the face of the inevitable, multiple catastrophic climate events we are facing?

2) Are we, as individuals, not assets? Yes, we are. Each and every one of us is affected by the climate crisis and can in turn affect it. So, how does a citizen stay resilient when they decide to work to reverse this disaster? How does a climate activist build resilience in the face of doubt, denial and outright intimidation against what she wants to do, moreover, against the very idea of what she wants to do: help save our planet by moving away from fossil fuels?

Fortunately there is good and inspiring work being done on personal resilience, and here are a few examples. [Joanna Macy](#) is a scholar, teacher and activist that brings six decades of activism experience together in work that she calls *Active Hope*. Her work is similar to that of [Adrienne Maree Brown's Emergent Strategy](#) in that the work helps people discover new ways of seeing and developing strategies to fight the good fight. If you believe that climate work is basically land-based work, then you'll find [Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer](#) an inspirational work. Decolonization is not a metaphor in [Tommy Rico's "NATURE POEM."](#)

These are but a few examples. If you have favorite authors, writings that you would like to share, or a story about climate resilience to tell, please contact me, Craig Menteeer (350MT Co-chair) via email, manmenteeer@gmail.com. Hope is not a feeling. Hope is an action.

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