

# Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter

## May 2019

**UU Seventh Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. Environmental Justice (EJ): Addressing disproportionate and adverse human health or environmental effects in communities of low-income residents or persons of color.**

### EJTF ACTIVITIES

#### EARTH DAY

On Earth Day (4/22/2019), EJTF Chair Nancy Griffeth joined with a number of environmental groups in an Earth Day press conference at the State House Annex in Trenton (see photo). The groups demanded that the state Legislature and Governor move forward on a strong environmental agenda for New Jersey, issuing a comprehensive press release that emphasized the climate crisis that's getting worse. "Sea levels are rising and we have more extreme weather. New Jersey residents worry about climate damage and the potential impact of proposed fossil fuel power plants and pipelines. What's even more alarming to residents and environmental groups is the lack of urgency the Legislature and Governor show when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases (GHG's) and moving forward with renewable energy."



(l to r): Amy Goldsmith (UU, Monmouth & Clean Water Action), Tracy Carluccio (Delaware Riverkeeper), Nancy Griffeth (UUFANJ EJTF), Doug O'Mally (Environment NJ), Jeff Tittel (Sierra Club), & Agnes Marsala (People over Pipelines)

At the press conference, Nancy Griffeth stated that: "Governor Murphy himself has set the state a goal of 100% renewable energy by 2050. The current arc of development of fossil fuel infrastructure will prevent reaching this goal. The governor reminds me of a riddle: Six frogs are sitting on a lily pad. One decides to jump. How many are left? Six — deciding to jump is not the same as doing it. And declaring a goal of 100% renewable energy without taking the right steps to get there won't get us there. Investing billions of dollars in infrastructure that will last for 30 years will prevent development

of infrastructure for solar, wind, and storage that can actually get us to 100% renewable energy. Setting a goal is not enough; he has to take action to reach the goal.”

Here’s the complete press release, that includes Nancy Griffeth’s statement at the end:  
<https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/earth-day-groups-urge-nj-legislature-gov-murphy-green-agenda/>

## UU FAITHACTION NJ SPRING PLENARY

EJTF Members attended the Spring Plenary meeting of UU FaithAction in Montclair on April 13, 2019. At the meeting, the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) reviewed the year’s work on addressing climate change and lead in New Jersey’s drinking water. We were actively involved in helping to define the rules for the Community Solar Pilot Project and have recently been working with the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to publicize the pilot in low income communities. We also commented on the Energy Master Plan (EMP) and are looking for the draft EMP, which should appear in early June, for further comments. We are among the founding members of EmpowerNJ, the coalition demanding that Governor Murphy declare a moratorium on fossil fuel infrastructure and sponsoring “Moratorium Mondays.” Also, we are signing on to Bill Potter’s petitions to the BPU and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for reconsideration of their permits for various pipelines. In addition, we are actively supporting the electric vehicle bills S2252/A4819, while pushing for a more aggressive transition to electric school buses and transit buses.

At the Spring Plenary meeting, Amy Goldsmith (Clean Water Action and the steering committee of EmpowerNJ) discussed the need for halting development of fossil fuel infrastructure in New Jersey. Ray Nichols (Vice Chair of the EJTF) discussed making comments on the Northeast Supply Enhancement to the DEP, which were subsequently written and submitted on May 2, 2019, and Bill Potter (former Chair of the EJTF) described the rationale for petitioning the BPU and DEP to reconsider permits for pipelines in addition to demanding that Gov. Murphy declare a moratorium.

The report of EJTF’s past-year activities is available here: <https://www.uufaithaction.org/reports/>.

## TESTIMONY AT NJ LEGISLATIVE SESSION

EJTF member Lyle Rawlings (President, Mid-Atlantic Solar & Storage Industries Association (MSSIA); President & CEO, Advanced Solar Products) testified at the 5/16/2019 Senate Environment and Energy Committee hearing on S3681, which requires all electricity in New Jersey by 2050 to come from carbon-free sources, and S 3215, which require state agencies to use the 20-year time horizon in assessing climate pollutants instead of the 100-year time horizon that had been being used. Both bills passed; Audio of the hearing can be found at: [https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/media/archive\\_audio2.asp?KEY=SEN&SESSION=2018](https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/media/archive_audio2.asp?KEY=SEN&SESSION=2018). The zero carbon bill is at 58:02 and runs for more than an hour. The 20-year time horizon bill starts at 18:02.

## "MARCH FOR OUR LUNGS: NO MEADOWLANDS POWER PLANT"

On 5/18/2019, Rev. Rob Gregson, Executive Director of UU FaithAction NJ joined hundreds of high school students, elected officials and residents in the "March for our Lungs: No Meadowlands Power Plant", a youth-led march and rally in opposition to the massive fracked gas power plant proposed in North Bergen Township and for climate justice:

<https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/bergen/ridgefield/2019/05/18/students-rally-against-controversial-meadowlands-power-plant-project/3709370002/>

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Stop New Fossil Fuel Development!**

**Make a quick phone call on**

**“MORATORIUM MONDAYS”!!**

In the midst of the climate crisis, New Jersey is getting overrun with fossil-fuel infrastructure. This fossil fuel expansion conflicts with Gov. Murphy’s stated goal of 100% of NJ’s electricity coming from clean energy by 2050. Please join with UU FaithAction NJ (and 78 other groups) in

calling Gov. Murphy on #MoratoriumMondays, to urge him to enact a moratorium on all new fossil fuel projects until NJ has a real plan in place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to 100% clean renewable energy. **Call 866-586-4069 between 9am and 5pm on Mondays.** You will hear a short message giving you talking points, then you will be put through to Gov. Murphy’s office. The goal is 200 phone calls every Monday! More info at <http://empowernewjersey.com/>

### UPDATE ON EJTF KEY ISSUES FOR 2019:

#### 1) Fighting against fossil fuel infrastructure

We are working on actions related to achieving a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure in NJ. We have joined Empower NJ - Twitter hashtag, #empowernj - a coalition of environmental groups, to demand that Governor Murphy declare a moratorium on building fossil fuel infrastructure. We are asking our members to contact the governor, especially on “Moratorium Mondays” (see above), to write letters to print and on-line news sources, to attend demonstrations against new pipelines and power plants, and to organize educational events in their congregations and in our municipalities.

In addition, we are signing on to EJTF member Bill Potter’s petitions to the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for reconsideration of their permits for various pipelines

#### 2) Reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions from transportation

##### - Electric Vehicles (EV’s)

**Legislation:** For electrification of New Jersey’s transportation sector, we are supporting New Jersey Senate Bill 2252/ Assembly Bill 4819, which “establishes goals, initiatives, and programs to encourage and support use of plug-in electric vehicles,” with some changes, for example, to include electrifying school buses and improving public transportation in New Jersey.

A position paper on electrification of vehicles is in progress.

## Be Aware: Growing Marijuana Can Increase Your Carbon Footprint



As UUFANJ advocates for both 100% renewable energy and legalization of marijuana in New Jersey, it's worth being aware of the potential conflict between those two goals.

It turns out that in states where marijuana has been legalized, the “carbon footprint” of growing operations is through the roof! One study showed that 3% of all California energy use was for growing pot; Denver’s Department of Public Health and Environment reported that the energy-hungry plants soak up nearly 4 percent of the city’s total electricity use.

The reason is that production facilities that grow marijuana plants indoors use high intensity lighting and cooling systems, often running 24/7. The good news is that as the problem has been recognized, efforts are underway to introduce energy efficiency measures, but with production demand on the rise the overall energy use is still increasing. In Massachusetts regulations set strict limits -- some of the toughest in the nation -- on the amount of energy growers can use to raise their plants.

As UUFANJ moves forward with advocacy on both issues, let’s learn from these experiences of other states and consider adopting some of their solutions.

### Sources:

<https://www.cpr.org/news/story/nearly-4-percent-of-denver-s-electricity-is-now-devoted-to-marijuana>

<https://www.wbur.org/bostonmix/2018/06/29/marijuana-energy-usage>

<https://sites.google.com/site/millsenergyassociates/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-up-in-smoke>

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/electricity-use-in-marijuana-production.aspx>

## ***NEWS RELATED TO EJTF ISSUES***

### **CLEAN VEHICLES**

- **OP-ED: Lawmakers Should Pass Bill Supporting Electrify NJ Agenda** – Per Rev. Ronald Tuff (GreenFaith) and Rev. Bryant Ali (Newark's GreenFaith Circle), bill S-2252/A-4819 embraces changes vitally important to NJ cities, including accelerating the deployment of electric vehicles and transportation infrastructure across the state, and moving NJ Transit to replace its heavily polluting bus fleet with a new generation of electric buses. These changes are vitally important to New Jersey's cities, where air pollution and climate change threaten public health and safety. However, the legislation must prioritize reducing air pollution and creating jobs in our cities: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/25/op-ed-lawmakers-should-pass-bill-supporting-electrify-nj-agenda/>

### **FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE**

- **State's New-Look Energy Plan Is Delayed, Now Expected in December** – The Murphy administration's overhaul of New Jersey's Energy Master Plan is being put off while urgent energy issues are being dealt with. The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities notified stakeholders the plan, touted as a road map to guide the Murphy administration's goal of achieving 100 percent clean energy by 2050, will not come out in draft form until June, and in a final version by December, rather than June as originally planned: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/21/states-new-look-energy-plan-is-delayed-now-expected-in-december/>
- **New Jersey Wants Trump to Scrap Plans to Drill in Atlantic, Arctic Oceans** - In a letter to the secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior, New Jersey's congressional delegation urged the agency to permanently withdraw plans to conduct oil and gas exploration in the Atlantic and Arctic oceans, a proposal that has triggered wide bipartisan opposition up and down the Eastern Seaboard. The bipartisan letter from the 12-member delegation from New Jersey came on the heels of the Department of Interior's announcement it would stall plans to expand drilling and exploration in the two oceans following a recent federal court ruling in Alaska: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/01/nj-congressional-delegation-wants-trump-to-scrap-plans-to-drill-in-atlantic-artic-ocean/>



- **N.J. AG Grewal applauds Trump Administration Move to Abandon Offshore Drilling Plans** - NJ Attorney General Gurbir Grewal praised the decision, saying the move could have harmed the environment as well as the state's significant tourism industry. The offshore drilling plan was scrapped after a setback in a federal court in Alaska, as well as widespread bipartisan opposition. NJ filed two lawsuits against the federal government aimed at stopping the Trump administration's plan to expand offshore drilling for oil and gas and finding out why only Florida was given an exemption from the drilling plans. Grewal said those lawsuits would continue: <https://why.org/articles/n-j-ag-grewal-applauds-trump-administration-move-to-abandon-offshore-drilling-plans/>

- **Threat of Lawsuit Halts Vote to Derail Controversial Pinelands Pipeline** - A vote by a state panel that would have derailed a natural gas pipeline proposed for the New Jersey Pinelands was tabled on 4/12/2019, after lawyers for the company proposing the pipeline threatened legal action.: <https://www.nj.com/news/2019/04/threat-of-lawsuit-halts-vote-to-derail-controversial-pinelands-pipeline.html>
- **NJ's Last Vestige of Coal Power is Gone** - B.L. England, the last coal-powered plant in New Jersey, was set to stop operations 5/1/2019 after more than 50 years of burning fossil fuels, Upper Township Mayor Rich Palombo said. "They're officially flipping the switch the morning of May 1," he said. "They'll continue having people working at the plant as it's decommissioning": <https://enviropolitics.com/2019/05/njs-last-vestige-of-coal-power-is-gone/>
- **Pipeline Planned for Raritan Bay is a Safety Risk That Keeps Us All Dependent on Dirty Fossil Fuels, Environmentalist Says** - As New Jersey shifts energy policy to focus on renewable sources like wind and solar, and away from fossil fuels, proposals still come forward to build "pipelines to the past" that serve no good purpose and take vital dollars away from infrastructure investments in today's emerging energy sources. One example is the proposed Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) Project being pushed by Williams-Transco, an Oklahoma-based gas pipeline company. The project would ultimately cross Raritan Bay on the way to providing New York City with twice as much natural gas as it could possibly use: <https://www.nj.com/opinion/2019/05/pipeline-planned-for-raritan-bay-is-a-safety-risk-that-keeps-us-all-dependent-on-dirty-fossil-fuels-environmentalist-says.html/>
- **FERC Gives Approval for Transco Pipeline's Northeast Extension** - The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) authorized the expansion of the existing Transco natural gas pipeline to serve New York markets. The expansion, called the Northeast Supply Enhancement project, will provide 400,000 dekatherms per day of additional natural gas supply to National Grid – the largest distributor of natural gas in the northeast. This project will expand the Transco pipeline to Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York primarily by placing new pipe alongside of existing pipe parallel to the existing right of way: <https://dailyenergyinsider.com/news/19197-ferc-gives-approval-for-transco-pipelines-northeast-extension/>
- **Major Victory for Climate Campaigners as NY Gov. Cuomo Rejects 'Dangerous' Williams Pipeline** - Grassroots climate campaigners in NY celebrated a major victory on 5/15/2019 as Gov. Andrew Cuomo blocked the construction of a \$1 billion pipeline which would have carried fracked gas from NJ to LI. The state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) supported concerns brought up by opponents of the project when it ruled that construction of the pipeline would endanger marine life and release mercury and copper from sediment in the New York Bay and Raritan Bay: <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/05/16/major-victory-climate-campaigners-ny-gov-cuomo-rejects-dangerous-williams-pipeline>

## LEAD IN DRINKING WATER (and other water issues)

- **Newark Begins to Treat Water With New Chemical Expected to Lower Lead Levels** - On 5/7/2019, Newark began a program to treat its water with a new chemical that is expected to reduce lead levels. The chemical, orthophosphate, a corrosion control inhibitor that prevents lead from leaching off into pipes: <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/newark/articles/newark-begins-to-treat-water-with-new-chemical-expected-to-lower-lead-levels>

- **NJ Joins Other States to Block Trump Attack on Clean Water Act** – The administration wants to roll back protection of tributaries, wetlands, etc. that shield downstream waters against pollution. New Jersey is joining with 13 other states and the District of Columbia to oppose the rollback of a key provision of the Clean Water Act, a step they contend would threaten water quality and likely increase flooding across the nation: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/17/nj-joins-other-states-to-block-trump-attack-on-clean-water-act/>
- **NJ is Home to 35 Sites Where Two PFAS Chemicals Top New State Limits** - Researchers have identified 35 New Jersey sites where drinking-water tests in recent years reveal contamination with two toxic PFAS chemicals exceeds limits now being implemented by state officials. You can search an interactive database of water systems and locations with PFAS contamination here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/06/nj-home-to-35-sites-where-two-pfas-chemicals-top-new-state-limits/>
- **3M, DuPont Refuse to Pay for New Jersey Chemical Cleanup** - Chemours Co., 3M Co. and DuPont are taking a stand against what one company called an “unprecedented” New Jersey order, saying they won’t pay for a statewide investigation of fluorinated chemical contamination. They asserted they aren’t responsible under the state’s Spill Compensation and Control Act. New Jersey’s Department of Environmental Protection in March ordered them to tell the state where and when they manufactured, dumped, supplied, or used PFAS: <https://enviropolitics.com/2019/05/3m-dupont-refuse-to-pay-for-new-jersey-chemical-cleanup/>
- **New Jersey DEP Says It’s Working with Chemical Companies to Curb PFAS** - After a scathing letter from companies, NJ officials say they hope for voluntary resolution to PFAS contamination. The companies said they could not comply with a DEP directive to pay for the investigation and cleanup of PFAS because the order was too broad to be effective. The companies also said it would be “wildly expensive” to even assess the costs of the cleanup sought by the directive, which the DEP said was the first of its kind in the nation: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/13/new-jersey-dep-says-its-working-with-chemical-companies-to-curb-pfas/>

## RENEWABLE RESOURCES



- **SEC Filing: PSEG Yet to Decide About Equity Stake in Offshore-Wind Project** - The BPU is reviewing applications for approval of plans to build an initial cluster of wind farms, to generate as much as 1.1 gigawatts of electricity. Public Service Enterprise Group appears to be keeping its options open on how much it will invest in the state’s ambitious efforts to be a leader in the offshore-wind industry that’s developing up and down the Eastern Seaboard: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/02/sec-filing-pseg-has-yet-to-decide-about-equity-stake-in-offshore-wind-project/>

- **Lawmakers Want to Know How Much Customers Will Pay to Fund Clean Energy** - Back-of-the-envelope estimates indicate Murphy’s clean-energy agenda will easily cost more than \$15 billion. Legislators are beginning to worry about just how much it will cost utility customers to finance the Murphy administration’s ambitious clean-energy agenda. At a wide-ranging hearing on 4/25/2019, top officials from the administration laid out what actions they are taking to transform New Jersey into a 100 percent clean-energy economy by 2050: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/28/lawmakers-want-to-know-how-much-customers-will-pay-to-subsidize-clean-energy/>
- **Lawmakers Embrace Goal Of A Fossil-fuel Free New Jersey By 2050** - Business groups say a bill approved by committee moves too fast, while advocates say concrete steps are needed to stem global warming. On 5/16/2019, the state took a first, if only tentative, step toward phasing out its reliance on fossil fuels — an action that nevertheless drew opposition from business lobbyists and flak from climate-change activists who argued it does not go far enough in dealing with the global-warming crisis. The Senate Environment and Energy Committee unanimously approved a bill (S-3681) that requires all electricity in New Jersey by 2050 to come from carbon-free sources, presumably renewable energy and nuclear power: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/16/lawmakers-embrace-goal-of-a-fossil-fuel-free-new-jersey-by-2050/>

## CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Three Governors Pledge to Cooperate on Delaware River Basin Environment** - The governors of NJ, PA and DE promised on 5/16/2019 to work together to preserve the natural resources of the Delaware River Basin but said there is only so much they can do without more federal money. The governors, all Democrats, signed a “proclamation” saying they would cooperate to provide clean drinking water, protect wildlife, address climate change using the best available science, and help the Delaware River Basin Commission, a water regulator that already represents the three states plus NY and the federal government: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/16/three-governors-pledge-to-cooperate-on-delaware-river-basin-environment/>
- **New Sense of Urgency in State’s Mission to Reduce Global Warming** - NJ needs to step up efforts to drive down greenhouse gas emissions, including weighing whether to incorporate the social costs of carbon into an array of government decisions, lawmakers were told during a rare joint hearing of the Legislature’s two environmental committees on 4/25/2019. Jeanne Herb, executive director of environmental analysis and communications group at Rutgers University’s Bloustein School of Planning, stated “To achieve the state’s 2050 limit, we need to reduce emissions by 75 percent below today’s levels.” NJ still does not have a statewide climate change vulnerability assessment to identify people, places, communities and natural resources most at risk right now: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/25/new-sense-of-urgency-in-states-mission-to-reduce-global-warming/>
- **In Battle To Counteract Climate Change, A New Reason To Hug Trees** - Roughly 2.5 million metric tons of the carbon emissions that cause global warming are stored in New Jersey’s forests. That issue is attracting the attention of legislators who are looking at how they can advance climate-change adaption policies in New Jersey, a coastal state particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels and extreme storm events. Not only are forests under increased strain from infestation by insects but also from wildfires, the latter a concern in the Pinelands where wildfires are part of the natural ecosystem: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/09/in-battle-to-counteract-climate-change-a-new-reason-to-hug-trees/>



- **Enviros Fault Army Corps' Plan for Defending NJ Back Bays from Rising Seas** - Groups say nature-based measures should be a bigger part of the massive plan to protect communities. In March, the Corps proposed measures including sea walls and storm-surge barriers, as well as nature-based programs like building up coastal marshes, as ways of keeping ocean waters out of vulnerable back-bay communities. The New Jersey Back Bays Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study Interim Report invited but did not publish reactions from stakeholders including municipalities, other government agencies, and environmental groups:  
<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/08/enviros-fault-army-corps-latest-plan-for-defending-nj-back-bays-from-rising-seas/>
- **Carbon Pricing Reaches U.S. House's Main Tax-Writing Committee** - Less than a year ago, the House voted to denounce carbon taxes. Now, it's discussing a carbon pricing plan supported by some Republican Party luminaries. A coalition of business and environmental groups, working with the support of some major oil companies, took a carbon pricing plan to the U.S. House's main tax-writing committee on 5/15/2019. It was the Ways and Means Committee's first climate-related hearing in a dozen years, and members of both parties treated the topic with kid gloves. For the panel to be talking at all about climate change is momentous—it signals that carbon taxing has moved into the realm of the possible. But members were cautious to avoid endorsing any specific idea:  
<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/16052019/carbon-tax-fee-dividend-pricing-republican-plan-house-ways-means-committee-baker-shultz>

## POLLUTION



- **Another Push for NJ Ban on Plastic Bags and, Maybe, Paper Bags Too** - With many New Jersey municipalities already having passed ordinances to reduce the use of plastic bags, straws, and Styrofoam containers, move is on for a statewide policy. The ban is attracting increasing support among residents, businesses and even municipal governments since Gov. Phil Murphy last summer vetoed a bill banning plastic bags while imposing a nickel fee on paper bags. (The governor vetoed it because he said he wanted a stronger version.) Since then, more than 50 New Jersey municipalities have passed ordinances. Advocates are hoping the spread of locally-adopted bans will pressure New Jersey lawmakers to move forward with legislation (S-2776) that is bogged down in a Senate committee.:  
<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/07/another-push-for-statewide-ban-on-plastic-bags-and-maybe-paper-bags-too/>

- **Organizations Applaud Plastic Bans In Coastal Communities** - Statewide organizations have commended municipalities that have pledged to ban single-use plastic waste in order to combat plastic pollution. The American Littoral Society and The Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) came together on 5/8/2019 with state and municipal leaders from across New Jersey to celebrate those local townships that have taken a stand on this issue. According to the American Littoral Society, approximately 82 percent of the trash picked up during Clean Ocean Action's beach cleanups in 2018 was plastic and Styrofoam waste: <https://www.jerseyshoreonline.com/new-jersey/organizations-applaud-plastic-bans-in-coastal-communities/>

## OTHER

- **Critics Slam PSEG's Notice of Nuclear Shutdown on Eve of Subsidy Decision** - Foes say it's an effort to intimidate Board of Public Utilities as it decides whether big subsidies are merited for three nuclear units in South Jersey. Two days before it learns whether its nuclear plants will win lucrative subsidies, PSEG Nuclear filed notices with regulatory authorities to shut down the three units: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/16/critics-slam-psegs-notice-of-nuclear-shutdown-on-eve-of-subsidy-decision/>
- **Huge Win for PSEG as Reluctant BPU Approves Nuclear Subsidies** - 'The board is being directed to pay a ransom,' said Commissioner Bob Gordon. Upendra Chivukula was the only commissioner to vote 'no'. A deeply conflicted Board of Public Utilities yesterday approved \$300 million a year in subsidies to the owners of New Jersey's three nuclear power plants, ignoring three separate analyses that found the units profitable and in no danger of closing. PSEG had threatened to close all of the units if each failed to receive the utility-customer funded subsidies, which are dubbed zero emission credits (ZECs): <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/18/huge-win-for-pseg-as-reluctant-bpu-approves-nuclear-subsidies/>



- **Rate Counsel Challenges Nuclear Subsidy in Appellate Court** - The amount of the surcharge, which PSEG helped determine, is likely to be a linchpin in the proceedings. As expected, Rate Counsel Stefanie Brand on 5/14/2019 challenged the award of \$300 million in ratepayer subsidies to keep PSEG Power's three nuclear power plants open in South Jersey in a case filed with the New Jersey Appellate Division. The subsidies, dubbed zero-emission certificates, were given to the plants last month by the

- state Board of Public Utilities, a decision that ignored the recommendations of Rate Counsel, the BPU's own staff, and an outside consultant retained by the BPU. All three concluded the plants failed to meet the financial threshold to qualify for the subsidy. The scheme was opposed by some environmental groups and many business interests who argued it would drive up energy prices in a state already hit by high energy costs: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/15/rate-counsel-challenges-nuclear-subsidy-in-appellate-court/>
- **Potential Identified for Big Energy Efficiencies in NJ** - An analysis suggests a 20 percent cut in electricity use and an 11 percent cut in gas use is possible in NJ, with achievable net benefit savings of \$14 billion due to new energy efficiency programs. The study by Optimal Energy is expected to form the basic outline of a more comprehensive statewide policy for reducing energy use. The Murphy administration has identified slashing energy consumption in New Jersey as a key component of its overall goal of transforming the state to 100-percent clean energy by 2050: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/05/12/potential-identified-for-big-energy-efficiencies-in-nj/>
- **New Rule Could Cost Utility Customers Millions, Rate Counsel Challenges** - The New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel is challenging a new rule that it says could cost utility customer millions, if not hundreds of millions, of dollars in future rate cases. The regulation, adopted by the state Board of Public Utilities earlier this year, deals with how utilities use the savings they achieve when they file consolidated tax returns with parent companies and affiliates. (All of the state's utilities are owned as subsidiaries by parent companies.) The regulation changes how certain savings are split, now giving the lion's share to utilities at the expense of customers: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/30/new-rule-could-cost-utility-customers-millions-rate-counsel-challenges/>
- **BPU Considers Greater Energy Assistance for Poor Residents** - Subsidies already add a significant amount to customer bills, a situation likely to worsen as utilities move to strengthen the power grid, and roll out infrastructure for electric cars. The state is examining whether to expand its popular low-income energy-assistance program, a fund that ensures eligible recipients pay no more than 6 percent of household income to electric and gas bills. Consumer advocates say it is time to see if the energy assistance programs ought to be enlarged: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/29/bpu-considers-more-generous-energy-assistance-programs-for-poor-residents/>
- **Op-Ed: Nuclear Subsidy – Time to Restructure Power Sector** - PSEG's nuclear subsidy is the most recent example of cunning proficiency grown largely through snowballing political influence. This past month, the commissioners of New Jersey's Board of Public Utilities were backed into a corner, with four of their five reluctantly deciding to award PSEG a \$300 million annual subsidy to keep its nuclear generating fleet operating. The commissioners were pressured into making a decision based on dangerous emerging dynamics that are gradually undermining the foundation upon which our New Jersey energy economy is based: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/04/29/op-ed-nuclear-subsidy-another-reason-to-restructure-electric-utilities/>

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UUFaithAction NJ - Environmental Justice Task Force - <https://uufaithaction.org/environment/>  
Chair - Nancy Griffeth; Vice Chair - Ray Nichols

Visit our website for Environmental links and resources / sign up for email alerts / join the EJTF