



Environmental Justice News Summary May-June 2019

Energy Master Plan

The draft plan issued this month

The biggest development of the past month was the release of the draft Energy Master Plan (EMP). You can find a link to it at <https://nj.gov/emp/>, along with some other information about it. A news story summarizing the plan is at <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/06/10/draft-energy-master-plan-maps-njs-journey-to-clean-and-green-2050/1>. The draft EMP outlines seven strategies for achieving Governor Murphy's goal of "100% clean energy by 2050."

As usual, you must read the fine print. The definition of "clean energy" is "carbon neutral electricity generation." That sounds good and addresses global warming, but nuclear energy is considered clean energy and also fossil fuels as long as carbon production is balanced by carbon removal^{2,3}. The health and safety issues raised by nuclear energy and fossil fuels are thus not addressed. Good news is that the plan would accelerate the transition to renewable resources; it suggests ramping down subsidies for conversion from oil to natural gas; and it has provisions to help EJ communities.

The last EJTF call (on June 12) was devoted to discussing the plan and breaking up the work of commenting on the plan at the three stakeholder sessions in July, August, and September. For the most part, we followed the seven strategies of the EMP to subdivide the work, but added two additional categories, implementation and food. Our discussion will continue over the summer.

Energy Efficiency

One of the seven strategies outlined in the plan is to maximize energy efficiency and conservation and to reduce peak demand. The Murphy administration is already moving back funds that were diverted from the clean energy program and increasing spending on energy

¹ For additional perspective, see also an editorial from Fred Krupp of the Environmental Defense Fund, just before the Energy Master Plan was released, about the various steps New Jersey needs to take to "avoid the catastrophic costs of unchecked climate change," at <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/06/11/op-ed-the-road-ahead-for-new-jerseys-climate-leadership/>.

² A [northjersey.com](https://www.northjersey.com/story/opinion/editorials/2019/06/12/lofty-nj-goals-clean-energy-but-there-follow-up/1419577001/) editorial also points this out: <https://www.northjersey.com/story/opinion/editorials/2019/06/12/lofty-nj-goals-clean-energy-but-there-follow-up/1419577001/>

³ Carbon removal is the subject of current research: https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/06/12/new-plan-remove-trillion-tons-carbon-dioxide-atmosphere-bury-it/?utm_term=.ccaec6069cde.

efficiency (<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/06/02/no-increase-in-funds-for-clean-energy-overall-but-extra-for-energy-efficiency/>). Energy efficiency is widely regarded as the quickest and cheapest way to reduce GHG emissions.

There was a recent NJ Spotlight roundtable on energy efficiency. You can access information about it and a link to a recording at <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/06/12/improving-energy-efficiency-in-new-jersey-nj-spotlight-roundtable/>.

Decoupling was discussed at the roundtable. I have long been troubled by the proposal to “decouple” rates and revenues for New Jersey’s Electricity Distribution Companies (PSE&G, JCPL, etc). Decoupling would mean that the companies have a revenue target set before a fiscal year begins. If their revenues don’t meet the target, they can raise rates. If they exceed the target, they would lower rates. However, lowering rates— which makes decoupling symmetric — may not actually be part of the electric utilities’ plan. Furthermore, according to Stefanie Brand of the Division of Rate Counsel, they are already guaranteed a return on investments in clean energy, so decoupling would amount to paying them twice.

Some very depressing facts about the realities of EJ communities also came up when I asked what new approaches could be taken to making the clean energy economy accessible to low and moderate income households. The answer seemed to be “not much.” Mike Skelly and I had a discussion after the roundtable with Lauren Boles of NJEJA and Rev. Ronald Tuff of Greenfaith about the obstacles to access to clean energy and how to overcome them. I hope that we will develop a project to make some proposals to the BPU or to write legislation.

Transportation

Another strategy is to reduce energy consumption and emissions from the transportation sector. Although the EV bill (S2252/A4829) is stalled while Murphy and Sweeney fight over the budget, the VW settlement is being used to help fund an electrification program that includes electric garbage trucks, school buses, and port-related vehicles (<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/06/03/administration-promises-almost-25m-to-electrify-transportation-sector/>). We had some criticism of the EV bill based on its relative inattention to public vehicles and transit and its focus on private EVs and EV charging, so this is welcome news.

Empower New Jersey Moratorium Related News

The DEP denied permits to Williams Transco for one of the new pipelines, the Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) (<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/piscataway/articles/new-jersey-department-of-environmental-protection-denies-permit-application-for-nese-pipeline-project-citing-deficiencies-5>). The denial was “without prejudice,” so that Williams Transco can apply again (and has, on June 10, with a 30 day comment period).

The Delaware River Basin Commission recently confirmed that a developer, Delaware River Partners, is planning to build a Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) plant on a former DuPont site in Gibbstown (<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/06/11/drbc-confirms-plan-to-build-lng-export-terminal-at-new-south-jersey-port/>). This could encourage more fracking by opening up export markets, which may also be the target of some of the proposed New Jersey pipelines. A recent story about leaks at an LNG plant in Louisiana adds a public safety component to this story (<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060427035>).