



BCRC Regional Energy Committee Meeting Minutes

May 6, 2024 at 4:30 PM

BCRC Office and Zoom

Attendees: Wayn Goodman (chair), Jim Sullivan, Bruce Lierman, Bill Christian, Rob Costantino, Jim Hand

BCRC Staff: Bill Colvin, Janet Hurley, and Callie Fishburn

BCRC Regional Energy Plan Discussion

- Bill Colvin provided an overview of the Regional Plan update timeline. The goal is to have a completed draft by the July commission meeting with formal adoption at the September meeting. This will be a quick update to give BCRC more time to develop a web-based regional plan.
- The Regional Energy Plan is part of the Regional Plan update but requires a more thorough update to reflect new data and Act 174 standards. There are two new standards that need to be incorporated into the new plan; an equity assessment and a discussion of whether forest blocks should be considered a possible site constraint. The goal is to have a completed draft of the energy plan by the end of May, which the energy committee will review at a meeting in mid-June.

Regional energy goals

The committee reviewed the current list of regional energy goals and had several comments about adjusting wording for better clarity and emphasizing the importance of a livable climate and personal choices. The committee was also in favor of adding an additional goal(s) to reflect the new equity component of the plan. Callie will work on revising the language for the energy committee to review.

Regional constraints

The committee reviewed the list of regional constraints which are in addition to state-identified known and possible constraints. Jim Sullivan said that the prime agricultural soil constraint is already restrictive, and several other members agreed that there should be more discussion of how renewable energy can be compatible with agriculture through agrivoltaics, livestock grazing, etc. The committee was also in favor of changing the recommended 1km residential wind buffer to 500 meters to encourage more wind energy development.

New forest blocks standard

A new Act 174 standard requires that regional and municipal energy plans evaluate whether or not forest blocks and habitat connectors, that are not otherwise constrained, be considered possible constraints to renewable energy development. Bruce said that the forest blocks should not be considered possible constraints unless there is an objective set of standards and criteria established by the Agency of Natural Resources. Jim Sullivan said that forest blocks should not be considered a possible constraint to wind energy, but that development should still be environmentally sensitive.

The committee agreed that there are already sufficient constraints on renewable energy development that forest blocks should not be added, although Jim Sullivan said that habitat corridors should be protected.

Hydro development

The committee had a brief discussion on the development of small-scale hydro facilities. The committee agreed that the development of small-scale hydro facilities should not be constrained at existing dams.

Callie will incorporate all of the feedback provided by the committee and send a completed draft for review by May 31st.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 PM