



**For immediate release--**

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## **No room for new fossil gas power plants in mandatory climate targets**

*Current trends moving Oregon backward, not forward on Climate Action Plan*

SALEM, Ore. -- Oregon is trending in the wrong direction on fossil fuel “natural” gas, especially for a state with ambitious ideals of tackling its part of the climate crisis.

Governor Kate Brown’s executive order 20-04, the Oregon Climate Action Plan, set Oregon and its governing agencies to the task of significantly reducing climate pollution, with mandatory targets of lowering climate pollution 45% below 1990 levels by 2035, and at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

Yet early trends show the order is missing the mark when it comes to fossil fuel power. News of a **proposed gas-burning power plant** perpetually [managing to scrape by deadlines and regulatory scrutiny](#) is the latest in an alarming trend. If built, this gas plant would be among the biggest stationary sources of climate pollution in the state. Couple this with the initial proposal by the Department of Environmental Quality to **exempt current and future gas-burning power plants from its Cap & Reduce program** rules, a significant tool for reducing pollution currently under development, and it shows a lack of urgency to rein in a major source of climate pollution.

“Oregon is at a crossroad: are we serious about cutting climate pollution and transitioning to clean energy, or not? Our state just celebrated shutting down our last remaining coal plant, and now the state’s energy agency is permitting construction of a new fossil gas power plant right up the road. We can’t saddle our next two generations of Oregonians with that pollution in the midst of a climate crisis,” said **Meredith Connolly**, Oregon Director of [Climate Solutions](#). “Governor Brown and the state agencies she oversees must stand up to oil and gas interests by drawing the line on fossil fuels and fully embracing a 100% clean energy vision for Oregon.”

Renew Oregon calls upon Governor Brown and the agencies to deliver on the ambition of the Oregon Climate Action Plan:

- include current and future gas-burning power plants in the Cap & Reduce program,
- be rigorous in review of proposed new fossil fuel infrastructure, and
- take the mandatory climate targets seriously as the intent of OCAP demands.

We also call on the legislature to pass new laws to further transition Oregon to an equitable, clean energy economy, including to embrace 100% clean electricity in the power sector, so our state takes responsibility for its share of the climate crisis. Oregonians overwhelmingly support this clean energy transition as we recover and build for the future.

When the current fossil gas burned in buildings, industry, and power plants is combined, it is **Oregon's second largest source of climate pollution** after transportation, and continues rising. [1]

“With roughly a decade left to act to prevent irreversible and catastrophic climate impacts, allowing for new dirty energy infrastructure takes Oregon in precisely the wrong direction. Our state agencies have not just a responsibility, but a mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” said **Nora Apter**, Climate Program Director for the [Oregon Environmental Council](#). “Oregon has a major gas problem—fracked fossil gas. That includes so-called “natural” gas, which is the largest source of climate pollution in Oregon after transportation. Greenlighting a new fracked gas plant to be built stands in stark contrast to our state’s mandatory emissions reduction goals-- and only further underscores the need for Oregon legislators to support a transition to 100% clean energy.”

“We are still recovering from the worst climate-fueled wildfires in state history. Our communities deserve serious climate action and clean air as part of the response, as do our children and the generations who come after them. New fossil fuel infrastructure built today will create harms to our air, water and climate that stretch on for decades longer,” said **Don Sampson**, Climate Change Project Director for the [Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians](#). “In Eastern Oregon, we want new energy projects and good-paying jobs, but we want them to be clean energy like wind, solar, and geothermal energy -- the energy of the future, not the past. We show how much we love our children by how we care for the earth they will inherit.”

There is no room in Oregon’s “carbon budget”-- the amount we can afford to emit each year and still meet our mandatory targets-- for new gas power plants. Thankfully, they’re also not necessary.

“Oregon has the technology and workforce to build toward a 100% renewable energy future, so beyond the important health and climate implications, it doesn’t make economic sense to invest in new fossil fuel power,” said **Nicole Hughes**, Executive Director of [Renewable Northwest](#). “In some parts of the country, power from renewables plus battery storage is [already cost competitive or cheaper than existing gas](#), let alone expensive new power plants that utility customers could end up paying for over the next thirty years. With innovative demand response and a wider pool of renewable power sources across the region, among other undertakings, Oregon will be ready for a fossil-free future.”

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[Renew Oregon](#) is a clean energy advocacy [coalition](#) of businesses and workers, healthcare professionals and parents, farmers and ranchers, faith and community organizations, and individuals coming together to move our state away from polluting energy to a clean energy economy. We are working to create good-paying jobs for all Oregonians, protect air and water from pollution, and help families stay healthy.

[1] According to the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), roughly 7.3 Million Metric Tons (12%) occur from direct use of fossil gas, and around 6.1 MMT (10%) from gas used in the electricity sector. At a conservative 22%, greenhouse gas pollution from fossil gas is second only to transportation fuels (40%). Current

state accounting does not factor in lifecycle pollution from gas, which would include methane releases at the point of extraction and in transport. If included, this added climate pollution would obviously make the number much higher.

ODOE has further documented increases in fossil gas usage and emissions in the Oregon electricity sector over the past four years (from 4 to 4.33 MMT).

For context, Oregon's overall 2020 greenhouse gas target was to be 10% below 1990 levels by 2020, but total emissions in 2020 are closer to 10-15% above 1990 levels, widely missing the mark by between 20-25%.