

Howard, Jeff (DEEP)

From: Martha W. Klein <puckyshouse@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, July 31, 2015 2:51 PM
To: DEEP ClimateChange
Subject: Letter to Governor's Council on Climate Change

Dear Commissioner Klee,

It is with relief that I welcome the Governor's appointment of the GC3. Connecticut is experiencing climate disruption, and many residents take this reality very seriously. I hope the leadership of the state will take swift action to mitigate the effects already occurring, and to move us off of climate changing fossil fuels and to the carbon free energy system we need. The October 2011 Nor'easter, Tropical Storm Irene and Hurricane Sandy cost our state millions of dollars to repair damage caused by these extreme weather events. In May of this year, many towns in the state suffered record heat, like my town, and/or drought. Climate disruption is not a future fear, it is happening now, and immediate actions must be taken to prevent it from worsening.

In Connecticut, roughly 40% of the measured global greenhouse gases come from transportation and nearly 40% of measured global greenhouse gases come from power plants. Our energy sector is powered by about 40% nuclear, over 50% "natural" or methane gas, and 1% by coal. The rest is powered by landfill re-capture or trash-to-energy, hydroelectric, or other non-renewable sources. The amount of solar and wind power produced within the state is extremely small. The dearth of renewable energy is surprising, considering the growth of wind and solar power throughout New England. Burlington VT recently achieved the goal of powering the city with 100% renewable sources, and is at the same time producing more energy than the city needs. Connecticut recently committed to expanding the use of fracked methane gas exponentially, by converting 280,000 new customers to gas for home heating and cooking from oil or other fuel. These conversions are subsidized by ratepayers fees and administered via the "Green Bank". Expanding the use of fracked gas from the Marcellus Shale in our state requires new gas fueled power plants, like the recently approved Oxford plant, expanded metering and compressor stations, and enlarged high pressure gas pipelines.

The natural environment in Connecticut is slowly drying out, amphibians and reptiles are disappearing, maple syrup production has fallen by half, the ski industry has an uncertain future, and the value of coastal real estate will decline and be difficult to insure following more catastrophic hurricanes. We can't afford to ignore climate disruption any longer. Carbon cap and carbon trade programs like RGGI have been found to be ineffective at slowing climate disruption. They have been proven effective only in raising money for government. RGGI measures global greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide, which dropped subsequent to a recent economic downturn. However, RGGI doesn't measure methane (CH₄), which over its 20 year lifespan is a vastly worse climate change agent than carbon dioxide. The amount of methane emissions in Connecticut has increased significantly in recent years as our use of methane gas has increased, and these devastating climate disrupting emissions must be responsible, in part, for our worsening climate. Although no regulatory body in the state is measuring methane, we can estimate how much methane is escaping into our atmosphere right now based on measurements taken by scientists and published in peer reviewed journals. For example, we know that gas pipelines leak at a rate of roughly 2.7%, and we know that methane is released from compressor stations by flaring and venting. As a result of numerous sources of leakage, both intentional and unintentional, methane gas has a terrible climate change profile, and provides no climate benefits over coal and oil. The scientific facts are unarguable.

The single most important step to take now to slow climate disruption is to stop the fracked gas infrastructure expansion. Only when our electrical system is run cleanly does it make sense for many more people to transition to electric cars, which would decrease the significant climate disrupting emissions that come from the transportation sector. We should have an energy system powered by sun and wind, which once in place produces no carbon and little pollution. The money taken from ratepayers for gas conversions should be used to subsidize home retrofits for energy efficiencies and home renewable power. It is not merely possible to transition to clean power without building more gas pipelines, as other communities in New England have demonstrated; it is necessary for the future environmental health of our state. I concur with Joel Gordes in suggesting that the council consider an immediate moratorium on pipeline construction in the state, before millions or billions of ratepayers dollars are spent exploiting a climate destroying fuel. There is a better way.

Sincerely,
Martha Klein

Norfolk, CT