

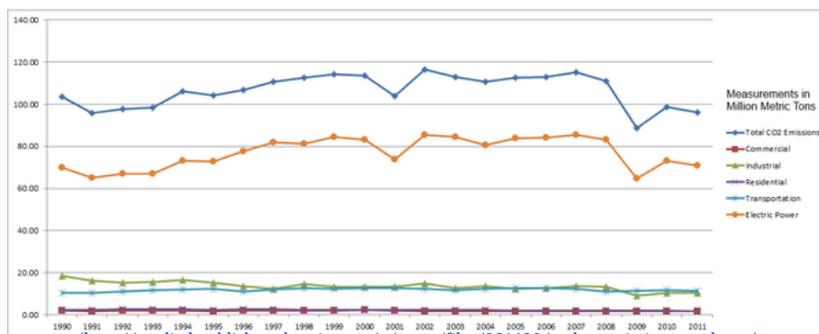
Carbon Regulations

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Four Ways West Virginia Can Reduce CO2 Emissions

By [GLYNIS BOARD](#) (@PEOPLE/GLYNIS-BOARD)

West Virginia Carbon Dioxide Emissions 1990 - 2011



Credit Dave Mistich / Data From U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Can West Virginia reduce CO2 emissions? The short answer, according to a new report, is yes. Will West Virginia reduce CO2 emissions? That's another question...

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5:58

The report is called [Carbon Dioxide Emission Reduction Opportunities for the West Virginia Power Sector](#) (http://downstreamstrategies.com/documents/reports_publication/clean-power-plan-discussion-paper_final_10-21-14.pdf). It was spun out of an annual conference on anticipated rules to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, the EPA's Clean Power Plan, Rule 111(d). An environmental consulting firm based in Morgantown, [Downstream Strategies](#) (<http://downstreamstrategies.com>), teamed with the [WVU Law Center for Energy & Sustainable Development](#) (<http://energy.law.wvu.edu/>) to come up with ideas to help West Virginia meet EPA-proposed greenhouse gas reduction goals by 2030.

One of the authors of the report and the founding director of WVU's Center for Energy & Sustainable Development, James Van Nostrand, said state policy makers might be too focused on only one method to reduce emissions that's referred to as the "inside the fence" approach (i.e., emission reduction measures taken to make power plants themselves more efficient). There are other measures that need as much if not more consideration, Van Nostrand said.

1. Energy Efficiency Resource Standard

The American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) publishes state rankings in energy efficiency. West Virginia ranks 46th, indicating that there's a lot of potential to improve energy efficiency in the state. An Energy Efficiency Resource

Standard would require state utilities to provide more efficiency programs.

2. Natural gas

West Virginia's first natural gas power plant is scheduled to begin construction in Moundsville in 2015, and begin generating power in 2018. So far, it's the only one...

3. An energy portfolio that includes binding renewable energy targets

West Virginia's current Alternative and Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (AREPS) can be met entirely with fossil fuels (e.g. coal ben methane, natural gas, coal gasification). That means renewable sources (e.g. solar panels, solar thermal, wind, biomass) are non-binding renewable energy targets. That could be changed.

4. Integrated Resource Planning

West Virginia's Legislature passed H.B. 2803 in 2014, which requires state utilities to engage in "integrated resource planning," i.e., a process to evaluate supply and demand resource alternatives that will meet projected power demand (considering conservation and energy efficiency) so that customers receive adequate, reliable, and low-cost services. *The Public Service Commission must issue an order by March 31, 2015.*

Three Years Late?

"How much electricity are we going to need? How much electricity are we going to have to produce to meet that need?" Those are the questions Bill Howley hopes policy-makers begin with.

Howley has been researching and reporting about electricity issues in West Virginia since 2005. In his blog, [The Power Line](http://calhounpowerline.com/) (<http://calhounpowerline.com/>), he says the suggestions Downstream Strategies and the WVU Law Center on Sustainable Development could help the state ... [if the report came out three years ago](http://calhounpowerline.com/2014/10/23/new-report-shows-change-is-possible-but-wv-psc-has-made-it-very-expensive/) (<http://calhounpowerline.com/2014/10/23/new-report-shows-change-is-possible-but-wv-psc-has-made-it-very-expensive/>).

Howley explained that while other states move toward renewable sources and natural gas power plants, West Virginia's Public Service Commission made a renewed and significant investment in coal-fired power plants that may have locked West Virginians into a 30-year obligation to consume power from those sources.

The Commission approved shifts in ownership of a couple major coal-fired power plants three years ago, Howley said, and when they did, they promised companies such as American Electric Power and FirstEnergy certain rates to maintain operation costs and profits. He said any policy that impacts profits significantly will certainly draw retaliation.

Tag. You're It.

With little wiggle room to tackle such a big issue like improving energy efficiency, how will the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection or the Legislature approach reducing CO2 emissions?

Policy analysts like Howley and Ted Boettner with the WV Center on Budget and Policy predict they probably just won't.

After all ... [during recent public hearings](http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0602-18863) (<http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0602-18863>) on proposed Clean Power Plan regulations, Senior Policy Advisor for the DEP, Tom Clarke, said "on behalf of all West Virginians ... the EPA's proposal should be withdrawn and its attempt to regulate CO2 ... should be abandoned."

Still, folks like James Van Nostrand and Jeff Simcoe remain dedicated to exploring options and making those possibilities known to policy makers. Follow-up reports are promised in the conclusions of this most recent publication.

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