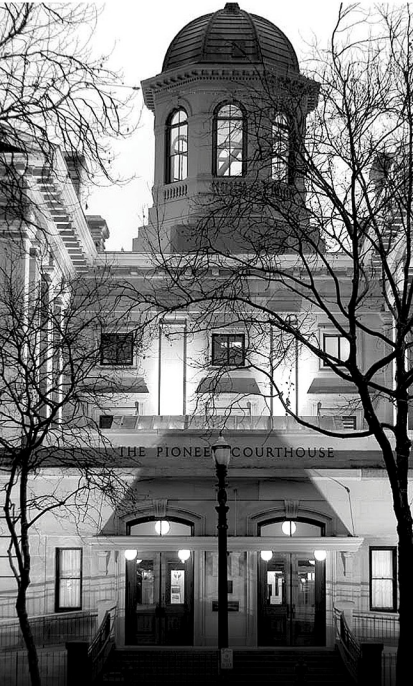




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TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING

NINTH NORTHWEST POWER PLAN

HELD ON

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2026

4:31 P.M.

100 MADISON STREET

MISSOULA, MONTANA 59802

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APPEARANCES

NORTHWEST POWER AND CONSERVATION COUNCIL:

Mike Milburn, Chairman (Montana)

Doug Grob, Member (Montana)

Brian Dekiep, Member (Montana)

KC Golden, Member (Washington)

Margaret Hoffman, Member (Oregon)

Peter Cogswell, Member (Oregon)

Jennifer Light, Director of Power Planning

PUBLIC COMMENTERS:

Ron Catlett

Mark Hayden

Jason Williams

Duane Braaten

Kyle Carlson

Joe Kolman

Shannon James

Bob Carter

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NINTH NORTHWEST POWER PLAN  
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MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2026  
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MR. MILBURN: I'll call the meeting to order.

And I want to welcome everyone here, and tell you how much we all appreciate you being here. And this is a very important part of what we do, so looking forward to your comments.

I'm going to read my prepared statement here that I'm required to read. I think they -- I think they wrote it out because they thought I'd probably mess it up.

So my name is Mike Milburn, and I am the Chair of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council from the State of Montana. And I'd like to welcome you to today's public hearing on the council's draft Ninth Northwest Power Plan.

Anyone wishing to provide public comment should sign up in the list provided. When the time comes to hear your comments, I will call people up to testify in the order in which you've signed up.

1           As the first order of business, I have a  
2 statement to make for the administrative record  
3 about this public hearing.

4           The Northwest Power Act of 1980 directs  
5 the council to develop a Regional Conservation and  
6 Electric Generation Power Plan and to review that  
7 plan every five years. The council's current power  
8 plan is its eighth plan, also referred to as the  
9 2021 Power Plan.

10          The council is now engaged in its latest  
11 five-year power plan review. The council released  
12 the draft Ninth Northwest Power Plan in mid-August  
13 for public review and comment. For more  
14 information, including the text of the draft plan  
15 and the technical appendences, please visit the  
16 council's website at [northwestcouncil.org](http://northwestcouncil.org).

17          The council will be accepting comments on  
18 the draft of the ninth plan through October 16th,  
19 2026. That act also requires the council to hold  
20 public hearings in every state represented by the  
21 council, which includes Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and  
22 Washington. The full schedule of hearings can be  
23 found online.

24          I would like to encourage anyone who is  
25 interested in commenting to please sign up on one of

1 our sheets located around the room. We have a court  
2 reporter in attendance to record your comments. The  
3 transcript of this hearing will be circulated to all  
4 council members and staff and will be included in  
5 the administrative record for the power plan review.

6 You will also leave -- you can also leave  
7 written comments with a staff member today or submit  
8 comments online. Instructions for submitting  
9 comments online can be found on the council's  
10 website. All comments received will be carefully  
11 considered by the council in making its final  
12 decision to approve the Ninth Northwest Power Plan.  
13 The council expects to make a final decision on the  
14 plan at the end of the year or early 2027.

15 So thank you. And first, I want to  
16 introduce the other council members.

17 To my left, first, we have KC Golden from  
18 Washington. And Margi Hoffman from Oregon. Doug  
19 Grob from Montana, and Brian Dekiep is a staff  
20 member of Montana. He keeps us -- he keeps us in  
21 line, so -- and then Jenn. Jenn is our -- the  
22 Director for our Power Division stationed up in  
23 Portland, and I'm going to turn it over to Jenn.

24 MS. LIGHT: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

25 Thanks everyone so much for joining us

1 today. I just have a short presentation before we  
2 open up for comment.

3 For those of you who have not yet signed  
4 up for comment and are interested, do so. There is  
5 sign-up sheets on the back of the room, and we'll  
6 make sure that we get you in the queue.

7 So just, first, a little bit about the  
8 Northwest Power and Conservation Council. You heard  
9 some of that from Chair Milburn, but we were created  
10 out of the Northwest Power Act of 1980. It sets up  
11 a governing body of the four states of Oregon,  
12 Idaho, Washington, Montana, where the governors of  
13 each state appoint the council members. And we put  
14 forth a power plan, which we're here to discuss  
15 today, a Fish and Wildlife Program, and we do all of  
16 that work in the public setting, which is why we  
17 have these public hearings.

18 I do want to quickly touch base on the  
19 council's Fish and Wildlife Program. The council's  
20 Fish and Wildlife Program is an element of the power  
21 plan that we developed, and the council adopted its  
22 most recent version of its Fish and Wildlife Program  
23 in June of this year. And within it, there are  
24 priorities. One of the priorities is to keep water  
25 flowing at important times for fish, while also

1 making sure that we have what we need for a  
2 reliable, adequate power system, and so we then take  
3 that and we feed it into our power plan.

4 The goal of the power plan is to ensure an  
5 economic, efficient, reliable, adequate power  
6 supply. I said those words in slightly the wrong  
7 order, but they were all said. And we do this every  
8 five years.

9 And essentially what we're looking at is  
10 where is the power system today? What's it capable  
11 of producing? How much energy and capacity might we  
12 need in the future, and what's the least cost, least  
13 risk way of filling that gap while accounting for  
14 things like environmental quality and other  
15 requirements under the Power Act?

16 So some key takeaways from the draft ninth  
17 plan. The first one you'll see is this large  
18 potential load growth that we're seeing in the  
19 region. The draft ninth plan does forecast over the  
20 next 20 years loads growing between 50 and 100  
21 percent. So lots of potential loads coming from  
22 data centers, electrification, just folks moving  
23 around and moving into the region.

24 That's a lot of uncertainty, but that's  
25 another key thing about our power planning is we

1 plan under uncertainty, not just uncertainty of  
2 future loads, but also future weather conditions and  
3 how that could impact the hydro system. When the  
4 precipitation is coming down, is it water or snow,  
5 and what that might mean for power, also for  
6 different gas prices, market prices. And all of  
7 that kind of gets fed into our modeling, and  
8 ultimately what we put forward is a strategy of new  
9 resources, and what we see in this draft plan is a  
10 portfolio of resources needed to meet those needs.

11 Where we are in this process, as Chairman  
12 Milburn said, is in this public comment period where  
13 we are looking for feedback from you as we're  
14 looking to develop that final plan.

15 I mentioned the strategy. One of the key  
16 things that we have to deliver in a power plan is a  
17 scheme for new resources, new generating and  
18 conservation resources to meet the system's needs,  
19 and this is the draft strategy in the power plan.  
20 It covers the next six years going up to 2032, and  
21 it's a mix of demand side resources, conservation  
22 demand responsible to tribulations that help to meet  
23 energy and capacity needs while also helping to  
24 relieve some of the burden on the supply side  
25 development of resources and transmission.

1 But we also have a lot of supply side  
2 resources. Renewables and storage help to bring  
3 energy and capacity while meeting clean goals that  
4 we have throughout the region. We also have new  
5 natural gas as part of a hedge, particularly in  
6 those low-water years it provides a valuable energy  
7 resource to the region.

8 And all of these resources are  
9 complemented by a suite of recommendations around  
10 permitting, transmission, data center integration, a  
11 whole host of other topics. That's really kind of  
12 what makes up the recommendations in the plan.

13 The council's power plan has a direct  
14 connection into the Bonneville Power Administration.  
15 They, if they need to acquire resources to meet  
16 their obligations, must do so consistent with the  
17 council's power plan or as the administrator  
18 determines is consistent with the council's power  
19 plan.

20 So we do have in this plan some direct  
21 recommendations to Bonneville, acquire the  
22 conservation that's their share of that regional  
23 target, support customer utilities in those other  
24 demand side resources, demands responsible to  
25 regulation, and should there be a need for

1 additional energy, look for renewables for capacity,  
2 look at the cost-effectiveness between batteries and  
3 natural gas.

4           There are some things that are beyond the  
5 council's direct role, or at least in what we can  
6 directly influence, but we do often speak to those  
7 things, as they're critical for implementation of a  
8 strategy. So as I mentioned, we have some  
9 recommendations around permitting and transmission,  
10 all of these things that can be helpful in getting  
11 that strategy implemented, and so you'll see those  
12 in the draft plan.

13           There are also some areas that are outside  
14 of the council's purview that we do not tend to talk  
15 about. We do not set electricity rates in this  
16 region. We do not make any decisions around  
17 existing resources and potential retirements of  
18 those resources. So those are things that are  
19 outside of the scope of the council.

20           So thanks again for joining us today for  
21 public comment. Again, if you are interested in  
22 giving comment and if you've not yet signed up,  
23 there's more sign-up sheets in the back of the room,  
24 and we'll call you in the order as names are there.

25           There's several staff in this room. If

1 staff can stand up and raise your hand so you know.  
2 We've got Peterson over there. So we've got folks  
3 around the room, folks from the Power Division  
4 working on all of our different issues that generate  
5 resources, conservation, and a lot of our modeling  
6 economics load forecasts. So if you have questions,  
7 reach out to us.

8 Please be courteous. We are all here  
9 happy to hear from you. I know it's hard to give  
10 comments sometimes, so please be courteous and  
11 respectful of everyone. We want to make this a  
12 comfortable place to get those comments in.

13 Please keep it brief and on topic. We're  
14 going to start with three minutes per person. Note  
15 that your comments will be part of our  
16 administrative record. We mentioned we have the  
17 court reporter. We will get that in hand.

18 If you came with written comments, if you don't  
19 mind sharing those with Christian Douglass here,  
20 he'll help make sure we get them in the record as  
21 you've shared them. So that would be really helpful  
22 for us.

23 And as said earlier, you can make comments  
24 online, too. We have a fancy QR code, also a  
25 website, if that's more your style, and we can also

1 help get that information to you.

2 So with that, we'll move through. As you  
3 are coming up and giving comments, please state your  
4 name, your organization, and please do spell your  
5 name as well. It's helpful for us to get the  
6 spelling correct for the record.

7 With that, Mr. Chair, I'll turn it back  
8 over to you.

9 MR. MILBURN: Thank you, Jenn.

10 Jenn does a super job for us in the Power  
11 Division, hard things, a lot of work, as her staff  
12 does also. So thank you to all of you for all the  
13 good work that you put into this draft power plan.

14 I did introduce the other council members.  
15 We had the staff stand up. But I do want to  
16 introduce Peter Cogswell right here. He's our new  
17 -- well, fairly new, not that new anymore, Executive  
18 Director. So again, does a super job.

19 I'll zip down the list. Like we said,  
20 just to stay in line with what has been done on the  
21 other hearings, if we could keep it to -- if you  
22 could keep it to three minutes. If you do need more  
23 time and we see what our workload is here, we can  
24 maybe accommodate that later on.

25 First of all, how about Ron Catlett from

1 Flathead Electric? Thank you.

2 MR. CATLETT: All right. Thank you. My  
3 name is Ron Catlett. That's C-A-T-L-E-T-T. And I  
4 am with -- Flathead Electric Cooperative is my  
5 organization.

6 Chairman Milburn and Members of the  
7 Council, thank you for being here today in Missoula  
8 and for hearing our feedback on the ninth power  
9 plan. We all greatly appreciate the hard work of  
10 the council and staff as you carry out your duty  
11 under the Northwest Power Act to strengthen and  
12 protect the Federal Columbia River Power System.

13 As I said, my name is Ron Catlett. I  
14 serve as the Government Relations and Key Member  
15 Specialist at Flathead Electric, based just up the  
16 road here on Highway 93 in Kalispell, and I do want  
17 to share some concerns with the council on the  
18 proposed dual conservation targets in the power  
19 plan.

20 Flathead Electric is Montana's second  
21 largest utility and largest EPA customer. Our  
22 service territory has a population of just about  
23 125,000 people in Northwest Montana. Despite our  
24 relatively large size for Montana, our opportunities  
25 to spend energy efficiency dollars on large-load

1 members are limited.

2 We have just eight meters in our entire  
3 system, with a -- with a demand of over 1,000  
4 kilowatts, or a megawatt. Our largest loads are  
5 three Legacy Timber mills, a cryptocurrency mine,  
6 and a large regional medical center. We work  
7 closely with all of these entities through our Key  
8 Member Program on energy efficiency projects, but we  
9 can only wring so much savings out of eight meters.

10 We then have to rely more on the smaller  
11 scale commercial, residential, and low-income  
12 measures to return energy efficiency dollars to our  
13 members. If this is the case for Flathead, as  
14 Montana's largest EPA customer, it will be even much  
15 more true for the smaller BPA customers in Montana  
16 and Idaho.

17 With the proposed increase in efficiency  
18 targets, the dual conservation targets would likely  
19 leave us with us with fewer of the aforementioned  
20 measures to return our members the dollars they've  
21 hand raised in EPA. This greatly increases the  
22 likelihood that Flathead Electric member dollars  
23 will be spent on energy efficiency projects in  
24 Oregon and Washington.

25 We understand that measures targeted at

1 large loads in the more -- in more urban areas get  
2 better bang for their buck. That's why -- that's  
3 why a better idea than having dual conservation  
4 targets would be to use the council's geographic  
5 analysis as guidance but keep a single target that  
6 let's utilities capture the most practical and cost-  
7 effective savings available.

8 This -- this idea also is better for the  
9 region and the issue with cost-efficiency -- as the  
10 issue with cost-efficiency programs is much more  
11 rural urban than just Idaho -- or Oregon, Washington  
12 versus Idaho and Montana.

13 With that, I thank you very much for your  
14 time, and I appreciate it.

15 MR. MILBURN: Thank you, also. I  
16 appreciate you coming.

17 Mark Hayden?

18 MR. HAYDEN: Thank you, Chairman Milburn,  
19 Council Members, and Staff.

20 My name is Mark Hayden, spelled H-A-Y-D-E-  
21 N, and I'm the General Manager of Missoula Electric  
22 Cooperative. MEC serves the electric needs of  
23 approximately 14,000 members in Western Montana,  
24 with our headquarters located right here in  
25 Missoula.

1 Thank you for the opportunity to comment  
2 on the draft ninth power plan. I appreciate the  
3 work that's gone into it and the challenge of  
4 planning for a reliable, affordable power supply  
5 amid growing demand and uncertain energy landscape.

6 I particularly appreciate the council's  
7 recognition that the northwest needs a diverse  
8 portfolio. Conservation, demand response, renewable  
9 storage, and natural gas bring different  
10 capabilities to the system. Our members depend on  
11 those resources working together to deliver  
12 electricity when they need it.

13 The inclusion of natural gas deserves  
14 recognition. It acknowledges the importance of  
15 dependable capacity alongside investments in  
16 renewable, storage, and efficiency. We're a Montana  
17 cooperative serving members through cold winter  
18 conditions. That balanced approach matters.

19 That same practical approach should guide  
20 conservation. Just as generating resources must be  
21 available when needed, conservation savings must be  
22 achievable in the communities expected to deliver  
23 them.

24 MEC supports conservation. Helping  
25 members use electricity efficiently can lower their

1 bills, improve comfort, and reduce demands on the  
2 system. We want -- we want to continue contributing  
3 to those benefits. Our concerns are about how we  
4 get there and whether our members will continue to  
5 have meaningful opportunities to participate.

6 First, I'm concerned about the scale and  
7 pace of the proposed increase. The draft recommends  
8 that BPA acquire 435 averaged megawatts of  
9 conservation by 2032. We understand that this  
10 reflects the council's assessment of resource needs  
11 and available potential. But identifying savings in  
12 a model and delivering them in our communities are  
13 two completely different things.

14 Actual projects require willing  
15 participants, qualified contractors, affordable  
16 investments, staff capacity, and time. Simply  
17 increasing a target does not automatically increase  
18 the region's ability to deliver those savings within  
19 the proposed time frame.

20 Small cooperatives also have a different  
21 mix of opportunities than utilities serving large  
22 industrial facilities or major commercial centers.  
23 Projects available elsewhere may simply not exist in  
24 our service territory, and as the draft recognizes,  
25 much of the remaining residential potential is far

1 more expensive to capture.

2 Second, we're concerned about the separate  
3 geographical targets and cost-effectiveness  
4 thresholds. My members help fund BPA's conservation  
5 programs through their power bills. I'm concerned  
6 that separate geographical thresholds could leave  
7 them with fewer opportunities to benefit directly  
8 from those programs.

9 If useful home improvements no longer  
10 qualify for support, members could face higher up-  
11 front costs and missed opportunities to lower their  
12 winter electric bills. A single regional target  
13 would provide greater flexibility to pursue valuable  
14 savings, while preserving practical opportunities  
15 for members throughout the region.

16 Finally, affordability and simplicity need  
17 to remain central. The draft recognizes rural  
18 challenges and calls for flexibility to minimize  
19 complexity. We appreciate that direction and ask  
20 that it translate into clear, workable program  
21 requirements, and a small co-op administration draws  
22 on the same limited staff who serve members and  
23 support daily operations. Those costs ultimately  
24 reach our members. We want as much of our  
25 conservation investment as possible to produce

1 lasting savings.

2 In summary, my request is straightforward.  
3 Retain a single regional conservation target to  
4 preserve practical programs for rural members and  
5 set achievable expectations so they can be supported  
6 by funding and implementation capacity.

7 Thank you for considering MEC's  
8 perspective. I appreciate the council's balanced  
9 approach and want to help ensure that every part of  
10 that portfolio delivers reliable power, affordable  
11 service, and meaningful value for our members.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. MILBURN: Thank you, Mark.

14 All right. Jason Williams?

15 MR. WILLIAMS: Hello. Jason Williams, W-  
16 I-L-L-I-A-M-S. I am the CEO and General Manager of  
17 Flathead Electric.

18 Council Chair Milburn, Council Members,  
19 Council Staff, thank you for this opportunity to  
20 provide public comment on the council's ninth power  
21 plan.

22 Flathead Electric is headquartered in  
23 Kalispell, Montana. We are the largest co-op in  
24 Montana, and the second largest electric utility in  
25 the state. We represent the interest of 60,000

1 members, with just under 80,000 meters.

2 Our average yearly energy use is about 200  
3 average megawatts, and our system is peaked at over  
4 440 megawatts. Over 90 percent of our supplied --  
5 over 90 percent of that is supplied by the  
6 Bonneville Power Administration, and any cost BPA  
7 incurs will be borne by our members.

8 We recognize that a tremendous amount of  
9 work has been completed to develop the draft ninth  
10 power plan, and it is a meaty document. Tonight,  
11 however, I will be focusing my comments around  
12 conservation.

13 A lot of comments are going to focus on  
14 the target amount of conservation, and I am also  
15 concerned about the ability to achieve such a lofty  
16 goal. And a 45 percent increase in the target is a  
17 lofty goal.

18 It's not that we don't want to achieve  
19 such a goal. It is about the ability to create  
20 programs to achieve the goal. Programs that we  
21 could potentially lose because of the council's  
22 proposal to create a dual target split between the  
23 east and the west.

24 When I first heard the target range  
25 between the east and west, it made my wonder why we

1 were going to focus on east and west, as there  
2 already seems to be enough division between Montana  
3 and Idaho and Washington and Oregon in other  
4 matters. It seemed an unnecessary attempt at  
5 creating targets based off of geographical location.

6 Flathead Electric strongly supports  
7 keeping the single regional conservation target, or  
8 what I like to call don't tell me how to do it, just  
9 tell me what you want.

10 The real issue with conservation targets  
11 isn't locational or east or west. It is big versus  
12 small. It just happens that the biggest utilities  
13 are west of the Cascades. The council's plan  
14 doesn't solve the underlying problem, but instead  
15 adds a level of complexity for BPA to manage a dual  
16 target program.

17 It will be more burdensome and cost more  
18 to administer the program, leaving less money to be  
19 returned to customers for their conservation  
20 programs. It will force BPA to eliminate certain  
21 programs for utilities in the east because of the  
22 rate of return used, which will hamper our ability  
23 to achieve the target.

24 BPA's current program already better  
25 solves the problem by assigning conservation targets

1 based on Tier 1 loads. This assigns the largest  
2 conservation targets to the largest customers and  
3 essentially achieves what the council is trying to  
4 accomplish without changing the program or adding  
5 cost.

6 I believe the council is stepping out of  
7 the role as the agency to tell the region what we  
8 need, and instead is starting to talk about how we  
9 get there. We are utility leaders in the region.  
10 We know how to do our job. Tell us what reasonably  
11 can be accomplished, and we will figure out how to  
12 do it.

13 Thank you.

14 MR. MILBURN: Thank you, Jason.

15 Okay. We have Duane. Call Duane Braaten.  
16 Thank you, Duane.

17 MR. BRAATEN: Northwest Power Council  
18 Members, Staff, and Guests, my name is Duane  
19 Braaten. That's D-U-A-N-E. Braaten is B-R-A-A-T-E-  
20 N. I am a Trustee for the Flathead Electric Co-Op  
21 in Kalispell, Montana. I want to thank you for  
22 giving us an opportunity to comment on the proposals  
23 you have drafted in the new power plan.

24 As one of nine trustees, I am elected and  
25 given certain responsibilities to our 60,000

1 members. One of these responsibilities is to ensure  
2 reliable and affordable electricity.

3 Another responsibility we have embraced is  
4 the current Energy Efficiency Program. We have been  
5 successful in meeting our targets in the past and  
6 will work hard to achieve the current target into  
7 the future.

8 I feel the proposed increase will be  
9 difficult for us to achieve. While we do appreciate  
10 and understand the importance of energy efficiency,  
11 we are very mindful of the reality of targets that  
12 are not achievable and the negative impact that it  
13 would have on our rates.

14 The demographics of our membership is  
15 largely residential and much of the low-hanging  
16 fruit has already been picked by industrial members.  
17 I look at the associated costs of these new targets  
18 as stranded costs that we will not be able to  
19 recover. Some Montana co-ops are already unable to  
20 meet their current targets, thus making this new  
21 proposal even more problematic for them.

22 We're constantly challenged with price  
23 increases in so many areas of our operation and many  
24 of which we have no control over. I'm asking you in  
25 the name of public power to please consider the

1 practicality of increasing cost burdens that will  
2 have little to no effect on conservation.

3 59,999 Flathead Electric members and I, as  
4 well as many other public power users, thank you for  
5 your consideration.

6 MR. MILBURN: Thank you, Duane.

7 All right. Kyle Carlson?

8 MR. CARLSON: Good evening. My name is  
9 Kyle Carlson. I'm with Flathead Electric. Carlson  
10 is C-A-R-L-S-O-N.

11 Council Chair, Council Members, and  
12 Council Staffers, I appreciate the opportunity to  
13 make a comment, and I appreciate all the hard work  
14 that's gone into drafting this plan.

15 As I stated, my name is Kyle Carlson. I  
16 serve as the Energy Services Supervisor for Flathead  
17 Electric Cooperative in Northwest Montana and  
18 oversee all sectors of our energy conservation  
19 programs.

20 I appreciate the opportunity to speak  
21 today regarding the proposed split conservation  
22 targets in the ninth power plan. From my  
23 perspective working directly with our members, I'm  
24 concerned about the potential loss of residential  
25 conservation measures and the impact that could have

1 on families we serve.

2 Programs supporting heat pumps,  
3 weatherization improvements, and energy efficient  
4 new construction are not just numbers on a  
5 spreadsheet. They are practical tools that help our  
6 members reduce energy consumption, manage household  
7 budgets, and improve comfort in their homes.

8 Many of our members live in rural areas  
9 where winters are long. Heating costs can be  
10 significant, and family budgets are already  
11 stretched. When BPA conservation funding supports  
12 residential efficiency projects, our members receive  
13 a direct and measurable benefit from the dollars  
14 they've already paid into the system through their  
15 power rates.

16 My concern is that the proposed split  
17 target approach could make many of these residential  
18 measures no longer cost-effective on the Montana and  
19 Idaho side of the region. If that happens, some of  
20 the most successful and accessible conservation  
21 opportunities available to our members could  
22 disappear.

23 For example, the last BPA rate period  
24 within our residential and income qualified sectors,  
25 Flathead Electric rebated over \$2.2 million, with

1 over 1,500 individual projects with an annual  
2 savings of over 1 million kilowatt hours.

3 As an example, consider a lower income  
4 member heating a home with aging electric resistance  
5 heat. Through our efficiency programs, that member  
6 may be able to install a qualified heat pump that  
7 lowers energy use while improving comfort throughout  
8 the year.

9 The result is often lower monthly utility  
10 bills, reduced strain during peak winter periods,  
11 and meaningful improvement in the member's quality  
12 of life. These are exactly the kinds of benefits  
13 our members expect when conservation funds are  
14 collected and invested.

15 I believe conservation should be pursued  
16 wherever it provides real cost-effective savings,  
17 regardless of state boundaries. The current  
18 regional approach allows utilities, like Flathead  
19 Electric, to deliver meaningful results for our  
20 members, while supporting BPA's conservation goals.

21 Thank you for your time and consideration.

22 MR. MILBURN: Thank you, Kyle.

23 Joe Kolman?

24 MR. KOLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
25 Members of the Council. Thank you to our Montana

1 delegation and also Members Hoffman and Golden for  
2 making the trek out here. We appreciate it.

3 My name is Joe Kolman. That's K-O-L-M-A-  
4 N. And I'm the Government Relations Director for  
5 the Montana Electric Cooperative Association. We  
6 represent 25 co-ops across the state, including  
7 seven on the western side that are preference  
8 customers of BPA.

9 As Jason said, the ninth power plan is a  
10 meaty read. I would also -- I would also add that  
11 it's a good read. Reading through what -- what you,  
12 as council members, and the rest of us are facing in  
13 terms of new energy loads and how we're going to  
14 serve them is a -- is a fascinating read.

15 We appreciate the work that went into that  
16 plan, and also, when you're reading it, you can see  
17 that the council and the staff has upped their --  
18 their analysis and looking at new ways to satisfy  
19 both those -- those issues of supply and demand.

20 As people said, we appreciate that you  
21 have found that there is no silver bullet. That  
22 being said, it laid  
23 -- the plan lays out a lot of really great options,  
24 and we do appreciate that natural gas is one of  
25 those solutions. We get that natural gas has its

1 proponents and opponents, but the reality is with  
2 reduced hydro power and intermittent renewables,  
3 there is -- there is a need for some of that solid  
4 base energy.

5           Again, with the -- with the single target  
6 and the dual target, you heard from our members who  
7 can -- who can speak to that directly as the  
8 implementers of that -- of that strategy. I would  
9 just add, though, that, again, the document lays out  
10 a good -- a good basis for the dual target, and it's  
11 understandable how staff got there, and it's  
12 understandable you would consider that.

13           Based on the testimony, I don't think it's  
14 implementable for -- for the BPA and our folks at  
15 the time, but I don't want you to think for a minute  
16 that that work is wasted. I think that work and  
17 that analysis is really good, and it will improve  
18 things going forward. I mean, we all want to get to  
19 the same place, and I think eventually that work  
20 will help inform those decisions.

21           I think I'll end with, you know, we  
22 appreciate being at the table. We welcome  
23 questions. We are happy to provide input and  
24 answers if we can. We'll continue to be at the  
25 table, and we have full faith that the council and

1 the staff, in the words of Chairman Milburn, which I  
2 really liked when he said it in October, we're going  
3 to land this plane.

4 I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 MR. MILBURN: Thank you, Joe. I  
6 appreciate it.

7 MS. HOFFMAN: If anybody can land a plane,  
8 it's you.

9 MR. MILBURN: What's that?

10 MS. HOFFMAN: I said if anybody can land a  
11 plane, it's you.

12 MR. MILBURN: Oh, well, thank you. We'll  
13 do what we can together.

14 Thank you, Joe.

15 Next is Shannon. Shannon James?

16 MS. JAMES: Good evening. My name is  
17 Shannon James, J-A-M-E-S, with Montana Environmental  
18 Information Center. I know you heard from my  
19 colleague during the online hearing last week, so  
20 I'll keep my comments brief.

21 MEIC supports many of the plan's core  
22 priorities. We appreciate the emphasis on energy  
23 conservation, demand response, renewable energy, and  
24 energy storage. This diverse resource makes and  
25 strengthens both reliability and affordability. We

1 support maximizing energy efficiency, renewables  
2 paired with storage and demand response.

3 Our primary concern is the plan's proposal  
4 for 2,100 megawatts of new natural gas generation.  
5 The plan's own modeling shows that investments in  
6 transmission, storage, and renewable energy can  
7 reduce reliance on gas. That is important because  
8 new gas infrastructure comes with significant long-  
9 term costs and exposes the region to volatile and  
10 potentially can strain fuel supplies.

11 Rather than committing to new gas  
12 generation, we urge the council to take a closer  
13 look at how those resources can work together. More  
14 conservation can reduce demand. Demand response can  
15 provide flexibility when the system needs it.  
16 Transmission can allow the region to share more  
17 renewable power across state lines, and renewable  
18 energy paired with storage can provide reliable  
19 power when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't  
20 blowing.

21 We also encourage the council to convene a  
22 regional load management forum to develop a strategy  
23 for managing major new loads, including data  
24 centers. Looking across the plan's 20-year horizon,  
25 enhanced geothermal also shows promise as a source

1 of clean affordable power.

2 We are concerned, however, by the plan's  
3 consideration of nuclear power as a source of clean  
4 baseload generation. Nuclear power requires uranium  
5 mining and creates radioactive waste that we still  
6 have no solution for. It is the most expensive  
7 generation option. There also are currently no  
8 commercially operating SMRs in the United States,  
9 and the federal government is rapidly deregulating  
10 this industry. Given the uncertainty and cost  
11 involved, nuclear should not play a role in future  
12 resource planning.

13 The northwest has the tools to meet  
14 growing electricity demand without locking ourselves  
15 into unnecessary fossil fuel infrastructure, and we  
16 urge the council to maximize clean, flexible  
17 resources and reduce the role of new natural gas in  
18 the ninth power plan.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. MILBURN: Thank you, Shannon.

21 Bob Carter?

22 MR. CARTER: Mr. Chair and Council, my  
23 name is Bob Carter, and I am a member of the State  
24 House of Representatives here in Montana. And I,  
25 along with Senator Lammers, have a bipartisan bill

1 in order to transform our Public Service Commission  
2 from an elected body to an appointed body.

3 And Mr. Chair, we have a 15-minute  
4 presentation that we'd be happy to give, but with  
5 your nod of the head, Mr. Chair, I can probably  
6 compress that down to four minutes or less, and I'd  
7 be happy to give you a quick summary of it right  
8 now.

9 MR. MILBURN: Could you go ahead and give  
10 us a quick summary right now trying to keep it  
11 within the three-minute period. At some point, we  
12 can have you come in and give us the presentation.

13 MR. CARTER: We'd be glad to.

14 MR. MILBURN: Okay. Thank you.

15 MR. CARTER: And as you likely know, the  
16 current setup for the Public Service Commission in  
17 Montana is made up of five elected positions.

18 In the last 30 years in the State of  
19 Montana, the legislature, whose responsible for  
20 trying to create the best scenario and setup to  
21 manage energy and regulate these for-profit  
22 industries in Montana, has tried to regulate these  
23 and setup a framework for the Public Service  
24 Commission, and in the last 30 years, they've tried  
25 several small changes to it, and I have not found

1 one that works or one that was successful.

2 In fact, in the last two legislative  
3 sessions, there have been changes proposed, and to  
4 be quite honest, I voted against them. I thought it  
5 as too dramatic. It would be too big of a change,  
6 and that's not what the state needed.

7 I've come 180 degrees now, and I feel that  
8 the current setup that the legislature has for the  
9 Public Service Commission is a failed setup. And in  
10 the United States, there's only 10 remaining elected  
11 Public Service Commissions.

12 The last one that went from elected to  
13 appointed happened in 2020 in New Mexico. They  
14 fully implemented it I believe in 2022 or 2023.  
15 Speaking with those folks, they've been very happy  
16 with the setup of it.

17 The last time a state went from appointed  
18 to elected was over 100 years ago. It was 120 years  
19 ago the last time, and so there's a reason why folks  
20 are going to appointed. And while I agree and I  
21 understand the pushback from going to an appointed  
22 position instead of an elected position, we think we  
23 have a lot of safeguards in place in order to  
24 protect the people and have the people's vote and  
25 make it a high priority for those positions.

1           And feel free to reach out to us. We'll  
2 give you all the details for it. And it came out of  
3 our Energy and Technology Committee unanimous, and  
4 so this is not now a Bob Carter, Senator Lammers  
5 bill. This is a committee bill, which in our state  
6 really holds higher priority, and so we're really  
7 looking forward to letting people know why we think  
8 this is going to be a much better system.

9           So thank you, guys.

10           MR. MILBURN: Thank you. You're a  
11 representative; is that right?

12           MR. CARTER: Yes, sir.

13           MR. MILBURN: Okay. Thank you,  
14 Representative Carter.

15           That's all I have at this time, I believe,  
16 so we are -- we will stick around here until 6:30 to  
17 see if anybody else shows up. So we will go into --  
18 what kind of recess do we want?

19           MS. LIGHT: Recess.

20           MR. MILBURN: Recess. Okay. We'll call  
21 it that.

22           (WHEREUPON, the Public Hearing concluded  
23 at 6:29 p.m.)  
24  
25

CERTIFICATE

I, Greg Salina, do hereby certify that I reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing matter and that the foregoing transcript pages constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said proceedings to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am neither related to counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any interest in the outcome of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of October, 2026.



Greg Salina, Certificate No. 1441

|                       |                                        |                                                    |                                                  |
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