Connecting People with Nature

Audubon Society of Rhode Island

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island
Opposes Invenergy's Proposed Clear River Energy Power Plant
February 1, 2017

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island's mission is to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitat through conservation, education and advocacy for the benefit of people and all living things. Audubon opposes the proposed 900MW power plant in Burrillville, Rhode Island because it will disturb the integrity of western Rhode Island's forested habitats and wildlife corridors and because the plant undermines Rhode Island's ability to achieve greenhouse gas reduction goals set in the 2014 Resilient Rhode Island Act. Additionally, Audubon requests the state clearly identify how it will comply with the 80% greenhouse gas reduction by 2050 looking at energy demand, energy efficiency, demand response and renewable energy before committing to a new fossil fuel power plant. Audubon is a member of the Environment Council of Rhode Island (ECRI), a 62-member coalition advocating for policies and laws that protect and enhance Rhode Island's environment, and supports ECRI's position in opposition to the plant.

Protecting wildlife habitats and corridors: The proposed Invenergy power plant would undermine the integrity of one of the most intact, forested areas in not only in Rhode Island, but also in Southern New England. Large tracts of forest are critical to the region's biodiversity as well as our ability to adapt to and mitigate against the threats of climate change.

Achieving State Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals: The Resilient Rhode Island Act of 2014 set specific greenhouse gas reduction goals for the State of Rhode Island: 10% below 1990 levels by 2020; 45% below 1990 levels by 2035 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. According to Timmons Roberts[1] the Ittleson Professorship of Environmental Studies and Sociology at Brown University, "Building a new 900-megawatt gas- and oil-fired power plant in Rhode Island will make it impossible for the state to achieve the carbon-emission-reduction goals set forth in the Resilient Rhode Island Act".

Near Zero Energy Grid. Rhode Island's Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) is charged with developing a plan for achieving the Resilient Rhode Island Act's greenhouse gas reduction goals. The plan, issued in December 2016, states, "An 80% GHG reduction by 2050 would likely require a near-zero carbon grid coupled with significant electrification of residential/commercial space heating and on-road vehicles". The Invenergy facility is not the right decision for the state or the region if we are urgently moving toward a near-zero energy grid.

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island is a member of ECRI and supports ECRI's position in opposition to the Invenergy facility.

"Climate change is the most urgent problem facing Rhode Island and, indeed, the world. One of the major causes of climate change is the burning of fossil fuels, like coal, oil and natural gas, to make energy. In this context, the Environment Council of Rhode Island (ECRI) strongly opposes the proposal to build a new, long-lived natural gas fueled electricity generator in Burrillville. ECRI supports the quickest transition to clean, renewable energy and greater energy efficiency; this is not the time to be building new fossil fuel-fired power plants. The Environment Council of Rhode Island is the voice of the environmental community in Rhode Island. It is a coalition of all 62 small, medium, and large environmental groups in the state."

[1] http://www.clf.org/blog/timmons-roberts-new-fossil-fuel-power-plant-in-rhode-island.

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