



Stephen Hoffman

From: ecomment@pa.gov
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 12:49 PM
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Cc: c-jflanagan@pa.gov
Subject: Comment received - Proposed Rulemaking: CO2 Budget Trading Program (#7-559)

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The enclosed comment was received as part of the following testimony:

Testimony name: Public Hearing 6 (6pm) - #7-559
Testimony date: 12/10/2020 12:00:00 AM
Testimony location: WebEx

Re: eComment System

The Department of Environmental Protection has received the following comments on Proposed Rulemaking: CO2 Budget Trading Program (#7-559).

Commenter Information:

Maren Cooke
(maren.cooke@gmail.com)
6745 Forest Glen Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15217 US

Comments entered:

Greetings. I spoke at the hearing on December 10th. Here is a written version of my testimony. Thanks for the opportunity to weigh in.

— Maren Leyla Cooke, PhD.

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My name is Maren Cooke, and I live in Pittsburgh. I'm a planetary scientist by training, now doing mostly science and environmental education. I work with several local and regional environmental organizations and institutions and am a Climate Reality Leader, but I'm speaking as a private citizen.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm here this evening to support Pennsylvania joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Climate change is the single most serious problem facing humanity and the world; it is an existential challenge. We are threatening the quality of life, and indeed the lives, of our children, their children, and future generations. Will we go extinct? Probably not any time soon; humans are very clever and adaptable. But a whole lot of human misery has already been inflicted on people, on families, on communities by storms, floods, droughts, and displacement — the impacts, and costs, are mounting.

Every organism depends on others, in a complex web of life. Not just the food chain, but also interdependencies like water purification, pollination, and other symbiotic relationships. Humans are no exception; we also depend on biodiversity. However, humanity has driven us well down the road in the sixth mass extinction, where a mass extinction is defined as the loss of 75% of the species on the planet. Climate change is not the sole cause, but it is intimately linked with many others, as well, like deforestation, habitat destruction, and shifts in seasonal patterns — if a bird is migrating by the length of day but its food source operates on temperature

We are currently dealing with another huge challenge, a global pandemic — and it is significant to note that climate change will bring more and more pandemics as time goes on. The geographic ranges of many tropical diseases are expanding rapidly; as habitats degrade and people become more desperate, animals are coming in contact with people in new and different ways; and thawing permafrost will likely release long-dormant pathogenic microbes.

The good news is that when we solve climate change, we'll also solve air quality, since the vast majority of air pollution is associated with fossil-fuel combustion. Close to nine million people a year around the world die prematurely due to air pollution; about 100,000 in this country, and several thousand of those are Pennsylvanians. And even non-fatal cases of asthma, COPD, heart disease, dementia, and cancer are responsible for greatly diminished quality of life in communities downwind of polluting facilities. For the financially-inclined, this means lower property values, too.

In the big picture, humanity needs to wind down our fossil energy economy very quickly. We need to meet, no, exceed the Paris climate goals in order to stave off the worst of the devastation. We need to act especially quickly on methane, which is over eighty times as strong a greenhouse gas as carbon dioxide on a timescale appropriate to its short lifetime in the atmosphere — and methane is now dominating Pennsylvania's carbon budget. We need to make it a lot less profitable to continue to extract.

Right now, energy prices are distorted because so many health, environmental, and climate costs are externalized — society pays — while profits are internalized to corporations. Putting a price on carbon is a great way to use natural market forces to incentivize energy efficiency, conservation, and renewables. At the national level, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act can do that, but as a heavily carbon-emitting state, Pennsylvania has a responsibility to participate in the solutions, as well. At the state level, RGGI is already showing great results in other states. As others have noted before me, Pennsylvania joining will mean less carbon, more jobs, and better support for renewable energy initiatives. Further, Pennsylvania can target funds from RGGI to address disadvantaged communities, where people are and will suffer the worst impacts of climate change.

Boom and bust cycles are inherent in resource extraction, with temporary jobs moving around from place to place and from state to state. Selling fossil projects to Pennsylvanians based on jobs is false advertising, when many of the jobs go to people from out of state, and many others are temporary. We need to turn that tide, and start investing in renewable energy, which will provide more jobs anyway, instead of more fossil extraction and petrochemical madness.

Continued development of natural gas is incompatible with a livable future. Pennsylvania should certainly join RGGI, and Pennsylvanians will reap benefits now and into the future. Our participation is long overdue.

Thank you.

No attachments were included as part of this comment.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Jessica Shirley

Jessica Shirley
Director, Office of Policy
PA Department of Environmental Protection
Rachel Carson State Office Building
P.O. Box 2063
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063
Office: 717-783-8727
Fax: 717-783-8926
ecomment@pa.gov