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WORC: NEW REPORT OUTLINES REALISTIC PATH FOR CLEANER AND LESS EXPENSIVE ENERGY FUTURE IN THE WEST

Reducing Use of Coal, Nuclear and Natural Gas Would be Good for the Environment ... and Benefit Consumers' Pocketbooks.

BILLINGS, MONT. – Westerners would likely see lower electricity costs by 2020 if the U.S. adopts a long-term strategy to replace coal-fired electricity with energy efficiency and renewable resources, according to a major new report from Synapse Energy Economics for the nonprofit Civil Society Institute (CSI).

The Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) joined CSI today in releasing and commenting on the report.

Titled “*Toward a Sustainable Future for the US Power Sector: Beyond Business as Usual 2011*,” the new Synapse/CSI report outlines a future under which:

- The transition to a cleaner energy future results in a net savings to electricity consumers of \$83 billion over the next 40 years.
- The construction and operation of new power generation capacity, primarily from wind, solar, and energy efficiency, would create roughly 3.1 million new job-years – the equivalent of 310,000 people employed for the entire decade.
- The steep health and environmental (including water use) impacts of coal-fired electricity would be dramatically reduced and, by 2050, eliminated altogether when all such facilities are retired. For example, over \$450 billion in health effects and 55,000 premature deaths would be avoided relative to “Business As Usual” trends linked to pollution from coal-fired plants.

- Natural gas use in 2050 would be reduced 28 percent from projected levels for 2050 under Business As Usual.
- Power sector carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 2020 fall 25 percent below 2010 levels; by 2050, such pollution is 81 percent below 2010 levels due to a significantly increased emphasis on energy efficiency. Under “business as usual” (BAU) status quo trends, CO₂ emissions would grow 28 percent from current levels by 2050.

“We know people want and support a clean and renewable energy future that frees us from fossil fuels and toxic emissions,” said Ed Gulick, Immediate Past Chair of Northern Plains Resource Council and a Billings architect. **“This report shows what we already know is true; we can do that at a cost savings for consumers and provide homegrown economic prosperity for Montana.**

“Our office at the Home on the Range building on the south side of Billings uses 20 percent of the amount of energy to heat, cool, and light as a similar building built to modern building codes. Energy efficiency is faster, cleaner, and cheaper than any other form of energy.

“Those who rely on scare-tactic assertions about ‘higher energy bills for renewables’ need to join us in a responsible, fact-informed dialogue. The truth is that Montana can and should embrace a workable and cost-effective future that is built on cleaner energy.”

Civil Society Institute President Pam Solo said: **“The evidence is all around us that America needs to move to a cleaner energy future. The use of fracking in natural gas exploration is coming under scrutiny with new evidence of groundwater contamination and greenhouse gas emissions. Concerns are increasing about the vast amounts of water used at coal-fired and nuclear power plants, particularly in regions of the country facing water shortages. Events at the Fukushima nuclear plant have renewed doubts about the ability to operate large numbers of nuclear plants safely over the long term-. We applaud WORC for its efforts to help advance the U.S. in the direction of cleaner energy.”**

Synapse Energy Economics President Bruce Biewald said: **“Information has emerged over the past year suggesting that the cost of replacing coal with clean energy is falling. The current and projected price of coal has increased, and the price of photovoltaic systems has fallen sharply since 2009, a result of unprecedented growth in this sector globally. Further, the financial community is placing higher risk premiums on technologies with carbon emissions, making renewable energy and efficiency more attractive. Given these trends, a revision of last year’s study seemed**

especially timely. The results of this analysis are very encouraging. We find that a transition to efficiency and renewable energy for our electricity is likely to be less expensive than the business-as-usual status quo approach.”

The new Synapse report for the Civil Society Institute updates a similar report issued in May 2010. The new report is available online at <http://www.worc.org/BeyondBusiness2011/>

ABOUT THE GROUPS

WORC (www.worc.org) is a grassroots multi-state network representing farmers, ranchers, landowners, and consumers in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wyoming. WORC is based in Billings, Mont., with field offices in Montrose, Colo., Lemmon, S.D., and Washington, D.C.

Based in Newton, MA, the nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute (<http://www.CivilSocietyInstitute.org>) is a think tank that serves as a catalyst for change by creating problem-solving interactions among people, and between communities, government and business that can help to improve society. Since 2003, CSI has conducted more than 25 major national and state-level surveys and reports on energy and energy-related issues. In addition to being a co-convenor of TheCLEAN.org (<http://www.TheClean.org>), the Civil Society Institute also is the parent organization of the Hybrid Owners of America (<http://www.HybridOwnersofAmerica.org>).

Synapse Energy Economics (<http://www.synapse-energy.com/>) provides research, testimony, reports and regulatory support on energy, economic, and environmental topics. Synapse has a professional staff of 22 with more than 300 years of combined experience in the electricity and natural gas industries. Synapse assesses the implications of electricity and natural gas industry planning, regulation and restructuring. Synapse works for a wide range of clients throughout the United States, including attorneys general, offices of consumer advocates, public utility commissions, a variety of environmental groups, foundations, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy, Department of Justice, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, and others.

EDITOR’S NOTE: A streaming audio replay of a related news event will be available on the web at <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org> as of 5 p.m. EST on November 16, 2011.

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