

June 10, 2024

To: Board of Public Utilities Secretary, Sherri L. Golden

Re: Docket No. Qo24020126

Comments regarding the Energy Master Plan

Sent via email

Waterspirit is a spiritual ecology nonprofit, and the following comments are shared on behalf of our thousands of community members throughout the state, northeast region and beyond. Recognizing the interconnectedness of all life forms, we must prioritize clean and safe water as a sacred resource essential for sustaining life. The planet is demonstrating signs of collapse¹ and extremes we have never seen before. We must do all we can to protect water in all planning decisions. Fires, floods, droughts, tornadoes are no stranger to this coastal state-these extremes continue to affect all species.

We must preserve Earth's delicate ecosystems. By safeguarding the purity of our planet's waters and atmosphere, we uphold our responsibility to protect the sacred balance of life.

Waterspirit recommends New Jersey's updated Energy Master Plan (EMP) must urgently call for a moratorium on all new fossil fuel projects.

New Jersey is home to a landmark Environmental Justice cumulative impacts law, and 3 New Jersey agencies are presently suing² industry leaders who knowingly engaged in disinformation³ campaigns which resulted in disproportionately experienced deadly pollution to the public for decades.

100% clean energy by 2050 is an outdated aspirational statement; the 2019 EMP suggestions and recommendations must now turn into a tangible plan that includes: identification and sources of all resources necessary (financial and people power), greenhouse gas reduction targets for each industry segment, annual milestones, program management structure and annual progress reports.

Waterspirit recommends that the EMP address methane leaks, and measure their impact properly with existing and evolving monitoring technologies.

Acknowledging the climate threat posed by dirty methane gas leaks⁴--80 % more potent of a GHG than carbon--we must heed the call for deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, including by preventing hydrogen blending, to help limit climate crisis. New Jersey residents would benefit greatly from preventing dirty fossil fuels overall. CO2 levels were near 427 parts per million - 4.7 parts per million higher in March than they were a year earlier. Are you aware that this is the largest annual leap ever measured? The EMP is an opportunity to redirect investments and time into technologies and policies that do not exacerbate planetary collapse.

¹ <https://www.ecowatch.com/un-guterres-climate-hell-warning.html>

² https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases22/2022-1018_NJ-Climate-Complaint-FILED.pdf

³ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep00046.7.pdf>

⁴ <https://apnews.com/article/methane-natural-gas-leak-climate-change-401cc08ad784d42fc463ed00bce4983e>

Waterspirit recommends the EMP prioritize banning hydrogen production and use, recognizing its lack of safe transportation⁵ and storage and massive potential for detrimental impacts on the surrounding environment.

The surrounding environments where hydrogen projects are planned include communities which already experience drought⁶ and disproportionate health impacts such as heart disease, asthma, birth defects, premature death⁷ and overall cumulative impacts. Hydrogen power requires copious amounts of freshwater⁸ compared to solar and wind. To ensure worker and resident safety⁹ is prioritized, investments would be best spent on squeaky clean renewable energy resources and infrastructure. The use of hydrogen fuel cells in fleets is simply not as effective as electrification. Given the BPU does not control hard to decarbonize sectors, i.e. transatlantic maritime vessels, hydrogen use should not be considered as a potential fuel source.

Waterspirit recommends the EMP prioritize the well-being of vulnerable communities through squeaky clean energy policies.

Water, in its essence, teaches us about flow, adaptability, and interconnectedness. We must honor the sacred web of life by acknowledging the harms of air pollution forced upon vulnerable communities. Addressing the harms thrust upon overburdened residents of New Jersey is one way to move toward realizing climate justice. If NJ leaders are to uphold a commitment to climate justice, investments must demonstrably embrace truly clean and renewable energy sources like solar, and wind not dirty, deadly methane.¹⁰ True justice demands not just consultation but genuine partnership and empowerment.

Waterspirit recommends wholly redefining clean energy to specifically exclude false solutions and embrace technologies that honor the sacred interconnectedness of all life.

This redefining of future energy investments is at the core of what will begin to pave a clear way for a just and stable future. Young people living in New Jersey and beyond are experiencing the loss of their perceived future.¹¹

Waterspirit's team appreciates the opportunity to comment and is pleased to learn more about forthcoming community focused workshops. We remain a resource, please feel free to connect with us directly.

⁵ <https://pstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/11-28-22-Final-Accufacts-Hydrogen-Pipeline-Report.pdf>

⁶ https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FSW_2301_HydrogenWaterUse.pdf

⁷ <https://www.ehn.org/fractured-series-on-fracking-pollution-2650624600.html>

⁸ https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FSW_2301_HydrogenWaterUse.pdf

⁹ <https://pstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/11-28-22-Final-Accufacts-Hydrogen-Pipeline-Report.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://scitechdaily.com/methane-mayhem-unveiling-the-hidden-culprits-behind-u-s-greenhouse-gas-surges/>

¹¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(22\)01572-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(22)01572-0/fulltext)