

# NW Ratepayers Will Save Over \$250 Million if Columbia Generating Station Nuclear Power Plant Replaced with Renewables

*Portland utility economist Robert McCullough's study indicates savings to Northwest ratepayers of between \$261.2 million and \$530.7 million over ten years if the Columbia Generating Station nuclear plant is closed and replaced with clean renewable energy alternatives.*

[See the full report here](#)

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Portland -

"The rapid drop in renewable energy costs in recent years has been shocking to everyone," McCullough observes, "and it is now possible to affordably replace aging facilities, like the 32-year old CGS nuclear plant at Hanford, without increasing the region's carbon footprint."

McCullough Research's new report, "*Replacing the Columbia Generating Station with Renewable Energy*," builds upon the firm's extensive December 2013 cost-comparison study of the Hanford-based CGS nuclear plant, which accurately predicted the potential savings of replacing the CGS with market-purchased power for the past three years. In the new study, McCullough uses Energy Northwest's own cost projections and their historic deviation of 19% over projected costs, versus utility-based solar and wind price projections from respected financial firm Lazard to arrive at the range of savings estimated between \$261.2 million to \$530.7 million over the next decade.

The summary of McCullough's new report concludes:

*"Our review indicates that CGS could be closed as soon as the planned refueling outage in May 2017, with significant savings to Northwest ratepayers. If it is believed that CGS's power must be replaced to maintain resource adequacy, we suggest that BPA issue an RFP to assess whether Energy Northwest can replace CGS with carbon-free resources, beginning as early as the refueling outage in May 2019."*

McCullough adds, "As in our first report, we don't ask Bonneville and public power agencies to take our word for the cost savings they could experience by closing the CGS, but rather to test the market and see if our projections are accurate."

"Our goal in asking McCullough Research to complete a new study was to see if the carbon-free criteria for closing the CGS nuclear plant set by Seattle Mayor Ed Murray and the City Council last year could be met in an affordable way," says Steven Gilbert, PhD, co-chair of Physicians for Social Responsibility's regional task force on nuclear power. In June 2016, the City of Seattle and its municipal utility Seattle City Light, the largest publicly-owned utility in the Pacific Northwest, went on record in support of closing the Columbia Generating Station as soon as possible, with the caveat that replacement power must be carbon-free.

“PSR believes it is our duty to reduce the global risk of climate change *and* the regional risk to public health and the Columbia River posed by continued operation of an aging Fukushima-style GE boiling water reactor,” says John Pearson, MD, co-chair of PSR’s regional task force on nuclear power.

Oregon and Washington PSR have been joined in supporting the closure of the CGS plant by the Washington and Oregon chapters of the Sierra Club; Hanford watchdog Heart of America Northwest; Friends of the Earth; Seattle Fellowship of Reconciliation; the Oregon Conservancy Foundation; the Portland Alliance for Democracy; Women’s Action for New Directions; and the Nuclear Free Northwest coalition.

*What other supporters say about McCullough Research’s new report:*

*Damon Moglen, Senior Strategic Advisor to Friends of the Earth in Washington, DC.:*

“It is clear that old, dangerous, dirty and expensive nuclear plants like Columbia Generating Station can and should be replaced by an array of less expensive, safe, clean and greenhouse gas free renewable energy, efficiency and energy storage resources. The agreement that we negotiated last summer with Pacific Gas and Electric to close the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, the last in California, established that this is *the* way to fight climate change and rid the public of the terrible danger of decrepit nuclear reactors and deadly nuclear waste. We wholeheartedly support this historic effort to shutter the Columbia Generating Station.”

*State Representative Gerry Pollet (D-Seattle) and Executive Director, Heart of America Northwest:*

“It is encouraging to see that ratepayers can save more than a quarter of a billion dollars for a carbon-free renewable alternative that avoids the shadow of risk from an old nuclear reactor over our region.”

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