



### FUTURE OF GAS DOCKET

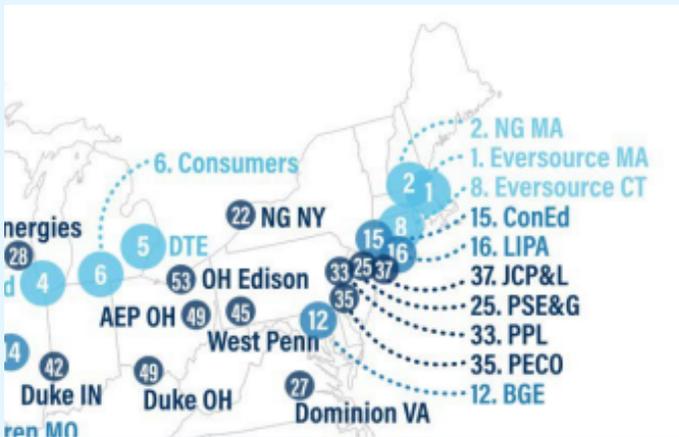
The Stakeholder Committee met on July 24th and August 31st to discuss scenario design, modelling parameters, innovative technologies, and more.  
Read more on page 2.

### EQUITY WORKING GROUP

The Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group convened for its second meeting to discuss weatherization barriers.  
Read more on page 4.

### EC4 UPDATE

The EC4 Advisory Board and Science and Technical Advisory Board briefly met to discuss program updates and other council business.  
Read more on page 5.



## ACEEE 2023 UTILITY Energy Efficiency Scorecard

The American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) hosted a webinar regarding its 2023 edition of the Utility Energy Efficiency Scorecard, featuring an overview of the results and two panelists. ACEEE is a nonprofit research organization that develops policies and scorecards aimed at reducing energy waste and combatting climate change. This scorecard evaluated the impacts of energy efficiency programs and the regulatory environments of the fifty-three largest utilities in the US, which collectively serve 60% of US households. ACEEE stated that they believe utilities are in the best position to deliver energy efficiency programs because of their vast access to customers.

The scoring system was grouped into performance, programs, and enabling. The performance metrics measured the results of the energy efficiency programs, including equity metrics for the first time. The programs group assessed the number and diversity of the programs offered by each utility. Finally, the enabling section scored the legislative and regulatory environment that each facilitated or inhibited the utilities' EE programs.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**URI** Plugged into Energy Lecture Series - October 4, October 18

**NEEP** Ready, Set, Scale Webinar - 10/19

**EBC** Moving Away from Metrics and Measured - October 24

**Green Energy Consumers Alliance** Annual Fall Meeting - November 14

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[www.riermc.ri.gov](http://www.riermc.ri.gov)

Eversource of Massachusetts, Pacific Gas & Electric of California, and National Grid Massachusetts made up the top three utilities on the scorecard. Alabama Power, Florida Power & Light, and Ohio Edison ranked as the bottom three utilities. ACEEE noted Iowa and Ohio both passed legislation restricting EE programs in the past few years, so their utilities consistently rank towards the low end. In contrast, Michigan passed legislation mandating increased EE programs, and now its two major utilities rank in the top 10. This emphasizes that a supportive legislative environment is crucial to energy efficiency progress.

Panelist Chelsea Harnish, the Virginia Energy Efficiency Council Executive Director, spoke on Dominion Energy VA's "most-improved" status on the scorecard. Dominion jumped from 50th to 27th in just three years. Harnish attributed the improvement to two state legislative actions, the Grid Transformation and Security Act (GTSA) and the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA). The GTSA allowed VA utilities to invest excess profits into renewable generation and grid modernization, as well as committing \$1B to EE investments through 2028. The VCEA mandates that VA utilities be carbon-free by 2050, established both a renewable portfolio standard (RPS) and an energy efficiency resource standard (EERS), and prohibits the proposal of new fossil fuel generation before achieving all EE goals. Both major VA utilities reached their 2022 efficiency targets, but Dominion is not projected to achieve its 2023-2025 targets. Harnish stated that the main lessons learned from this experience included that policy makes progress, diverse stakeholder engagement is critical, and utilizing the weatherization network for income-eligible programs is the most efficient way to serve low-income customers.

Dr. Sanya Carley, a UPenn professor of energy policy and city planning, presented on energy justice and equity. Dr. Carley discussed the common metric energy burden, which is the percentage of a person's income that is spent on energy. She explained that energy poverty and insecurity is more complex than simply a large energy burden. Households can become trapped in the energy poverty cycle, which includes three stages: struggling to pay energy bills, threat of disconnection, and disconnection. Disconnection leads to several health risks, including death. Dr. Carley then explained that the most common coping strategies for disconnection are dangerous behaviors, such as running the stove for extended time periods or accruing debt. Reaching out to the utility or government for assistance is among the least common strategies, and the utilities with the highest disconnection rates are the same ones who do not direct their customers to EE programs. Energy efficiency can reduce bills, make energy more affordable, reduce energy poverty, and help households avoid entering the cycle. Dr. Carley commended ACEEE for their strong use of equity in their ranking system, including it in 22% of the metrics. She recommended that going forward, utilities reduce barriers to obtaining energy efficiency measures, provide information to the customer base, and build trust and engagement with the communities they serve.

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## Governor Janet Mills announces new goal for installing heat pumps in Maine

Maine Governor Janet Mills announced that as of July, Maine has surpassed its goal of installing 100,000 heat pumps two years ahead of its target. This goal was part of Mills's climate plan to reduce heating oil reliance in Maine, which is used in 60% of homes in the state. The spike in installations can be attributed to an \$800 rebate from Efficiency Maine combined with the \$2,600 federal tax credit. The announcement took place in Kennebec Valley Community College's heat pump workforce training lab. Together, the seven campuses of Maine Community College have graduated 558 heat pump installers. Governor Mills has also announced a new goal of adding 175,000 more heat pumps by 2027. She stated, **"We've got to keep fighting to reduce Maine's reliance and the nation's reliance on harmful fossil fuels. We've got to mitigate climate change. We've got to save Maine people money. and support good paying jobs."**

## FUTURE OF GAS Stakeholder Committee

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Future of Gas Docket Stakeholder Committee met for the third time on July 24th, moderated by Apex Analytics.

Enbridge, a major North American natural gas utility, gave a presentation on new energy technologies. They maintain that the continued use of natural gas is essential in supporting the buildout of renewable energy. A stakeholder asked what energy share hydrogen would displace. Enbridge explained that there is a 3:1 difference in hydrogen to methane by volumetric energy density. Another stakeholder asked how hydrogen would affect consumer costs. Enbridge stated that they expect costs to go down overtime due to aggressive policy initiatives and tax credits that are available for hydrogen technology.

E3 gave a presentation on scenario design and three example scenarios: a high level of electrification with reduced gas system scenario, a hybrid electrification with an intact gas system scenario, and a mixed innovative solutions scenario. The committee had several comments on this section: Slight deviations between each plan and timeline are important to access cost outputs and emissions. The role of the natural gas system

within the economy is understood, and modelling must be used to find plausible solutions for customers who would continue to use gas if not for the Act on Climate. The committee must maintain the assumption that there is no “all of the above” solution, and it will take multiple strategies with multiple timelines to achieve the desired outcomes.

The stakeholder committee split into three groups to discuss scenario design, and each group presented three scenarios. Group 1 chose an economy wide staged approach scenario, a diverse fuel portfolio scenario, and a high electrification scenario. Group 2 chose a high electrification with prioritized energy efficient scenario, a strategic use of gas scenario, and a low electrification with continued gas system usage scenario. Group 3 chose strategic decommissioning of the gas system, a hybrid heating system scenario with the gas system as a back-up, a hybrid heating system scenario with tank fuels as a back-up, and a mixed innovative technologies scenario utilizing geothermal networks, carbon capture, energy storage, and more.

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The Future of Gas Stakeholder Committee convened for its fourth meeting on August 31st.

The Home Energy Efficiency Team (HEET), gave a [presentation on networked geothermal](#). HEET is a nonprofit organization that gathers stakeholders to find solutions that transform the gas industry to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency. The key issue featured in HEET’s presentation was the cost increase to remaining customers as more switch over to heat pumps. HEET suggests that gas utilities move towards networked ground sourced heat pumps using an ambient temperature system. The stakeholders asked why network geothermal is better than other district heating systems; HEET stated that the efficiency and modularity of network geothermal are unbeatable. The stakeholders discussed the energy burden of customers that do not switch; HEET stated that the cost is socialized across all customers when the utility manages both network geothermal and gas systems. The committee noted opportunities from geothermal including generating steam from thermal energy to power industrial processes that would be otherwise hard to electrify. The representative from Brown University discussed Brown’s current network geothermal project, in which 50% of the heating load will be provided by heat that’s generated and wasted already through ambient temperature technology. He stated that heat sharing is more efficient in urban systems where heating and cooling is most concentrated.

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E3 gave a [summary of submitted feedback on the preliminary scenarios](#). The stakeholders gave additional input here: Network geothermal should be included in diverse solutions and discussed further as an independent baseline. Current parameters likely underestimate the amount of leakage because behind the meter leaks are not measured in the models. The committee should only model scenarios that are biophysically possible. The TWG must carefully analyze emissions factors beyond state standards.

E3 then lead a discussion on each of the categories of feedback it received on the scenarios. The first category was sectoral tradeoffs and comparability between scenarios. The primary stakeholder feedback was concern that scenarios with continued gas use will require more low carbon fuels than are reasonably available to RI. The second category was gross vs. net emissions targets across scenarios. This consisted of questions on how gross emissions targets should be set within scenarios. The committee decided to test gross reductions while maintaining the capacity to implement net targets if needed. Next was the balance of hybrids within hybrid electrification scenarios. The stakeholders had interest in understanding how the balance between full electrification and hybrid electrification impacts outcomes. Next, E3 discussed the feedback on the timing and approach to decommissioning. The primary feedback was uncertainty around the extent to which scenarios include gas system decommissioning. The stakeholders concluded that the model should compare the cost of replacing old pipes to the cost of replacement with new technology. The data should speak for itself, as the PUC seeks to find the lowest costs for customers while reaching Act on Climate goals. Finally, they covered strategic decommissioning and managed transition, where the main feedback were requests to feature strategic decommissioning in all scenarios that include electrification. The stakeholders questioned if there was anything to be learned from an analysis of an unmanaged transition beyond serving as a reference point for the efficacy of a managed transition. They also pointed out that there will be significant equity implications of a managed transition, particularly the impacts on tenants if landlords are not given enough notice and structure in transitioning away from gas usage.

The Future of Gas Stakeholder Committee met for its fifth meeting on September 18th. The members of the TWG were announced and are as follows: Lee Gresham, Nicholas Vaz, Dean Murphy, Paul Roberti, John Willumsen, Craig Pickell, Samuel Ross, Joseph Poccia, Mike Walsh/ Ben Butterworth (alternates sharing one seat).

E3 wrapped up its presentation of scenarios from the prior meeting, covering scenarios 7 & 8. During the scenario 7 discussion, a stakeholder commented that generally, the scenarios need to include more criteria for



C&I. Another discussed how E3 needs measure of necessary additional workforce for each scenario. Regarding equity and affordability, a stakeholder stated there was a need for more discussion on the energy burdens of customers by income level. E3 agreed to add a percentage of income spent on energy to their metrics, modelling different customer classes. Another member raised concerns about limiting equity to financial burden and stated that health impacts should also be considered in any scenario.

Scenario 8 prompted a discussion on policy and legislative action within the PUC's purview. The committee noted that although the PUC cannot impose an economy wide carbon tax, they may be able to incorporate a form of carbon pricing within their jurisdiction. Other stakeholders were supportive of a full gas moratorium but noted that it would not address the existing gas equipment. A final recommendation was that either of these policies must be accompanied by an electric system that is ready for additional load.

Following the stakeholder meeting, the PUC conducted a cross-examination of E3 regarding process and scenario development. The next Future of Gas Stakeholder Committee meeting is scheduled for October 24th and will focus on policy discussions. E3 will begin modelling the scenarios promptly, and preliminary updates will be given at the November 28th Stakeholder Committee meeting.

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## California sees success tying energy efficiency rebates to real results

California-based software company Recurve is piloting a platform that incentivizes contractors to deliver grid-value over average electric reductions. The traditional deemed savings approach to measuring efficiency installs is based on estimates. This encourages contractors to prioritize quantity of work instead of focusing on the efficacy of their installs on reducing electric load during peak hours. Recurve's platform, FLEXmarket, uses "pay-for-performance" (PFP) to pay providers according to real world data on how beneficial their projects are to the power grid. PFP measures GHG reductions, lessening grid stress, and shifting of demand from fossil fuels toward electric. Recurve claims that in the past two years, they've delivered \$44.7M in total system benefit – a measure of how effective an efficiency program decreases load during peak hours and seasons when power is the most expensive and carbon-intensive to generate. PFP has been a goal for California since a 2015 energy efficiency policy passed making it a priority, and it is now mandated to be incorporated by the three major utilities in the state.



## Equity Working Group

The RI Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG) convened for its second meeting on August 8th. Facilitator Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) announced that the frequency of meetings would be changing to monthly.

RI Energy (RIE) presented on 2023 Equity Related Updates. First, RIE displayed participation by town through Q2. Cranston's participation was notably higher than any other, which a member attributed to its CAP agency. RIE showed some renter vs. owner information: market rate customers have 12.7% renter participation, while income eligible (IE) boasts 29.8% renter participation, signaling that the IE program is reaching customers significantly better than the Energy Wise program. This claim was questioned, as there was no data available on the proportion of market rate customers that are renters vs. the proportion of IE customers that are renters. RIE listed its various outreach events, and the EWG asked that information be provided on the success of the events with metrics such as how many sign-ups resulted from each. EWG members also requested that data be provided on the conversion rate of customers per area that added weatherization after receiving audits.

RISE presented a review of barriers to weatherization from 2022 into 2023 among Energy Wise market rate 1-4 family audits. Among the 54% of customers who had barriers, 24% were able to resolve them. Including customers that had no barriers and customers that had barriers but were able to resolve them, 56% of customers who received audits were able to go through with weatherization. The most common hard barriers included knob & tube wiring, mold & mildew, and carbon monoxide. RISE also presented on Women & Minority-Owned Business Enterprises (WMBE) who provide services in the Energy Wise program. There are 20-25 contractors in total participating, and currently 4 are WMBEs. 12% of the total work so far this year has been completed by these 4 contractors. An EWG member inquired about the size/pay of jobs among contractors. The RISE representative reported that jobs are assigned based on a merit-based scoring system, territory, and current volume of work. EWG members suggested that RIE reach out to the RI Black Business Association, Skills RI, and Small Business Hub to reach more WMBEs.

The EERMC C-Team presented on the council's priority to increase participation in underserved communities in the 2024-2026 Plan. The presentation was met with support behind the need for increased conversations about the



nature and depths of community-based partnerships, referencing the success of the Cranston CAP agency. GHFI stated that the EWG could benefit from recommendations from the EERMC on workforce development.

RIE solicited guidance from EWG members on what the metrics should be. The EWG stated they needed customer baselines in order to make recommendations. RIE also requested that the EWG brainstorm other resources available because certain metrics are broader than the company's scope of energy efficiency. The EWG stated that MA has a performance incentive for utilities related to equity and something similar could be effective in RI. The final EWG recommendation was that workforce development must include apprenticeship and high school exposure in addition to higher-level training to encourage new entrants into the workforce.

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The EWG met for its third meeting on August 31st. RIE presented an energy efficiency equity demonstration, which is expected to launch in early 2024. The challenge RIE seeks to address with this demonstration is that non-profit organizations are facing increased demands to provide EE education and outreach in equity communities but are receiving no additional funding. They stated that there is a need for innovative strategies to reach multifamily renters and better understand barriers to accessing EE programs. To solve this problem, RIE will use the demonstration to distribute \$40,000 in incentives to a select few non-profits for outreach and education for landlords.

The EWG gave feedback on the demonstration. The group suggested allowing two full years of demonstration and limiting the scope to 1-2 communities due to limited resources. Additionally, it was recommended that RIE track success through not only participation and energy savings, but also the demographics of the participating renter population to ensure the program is accomplishing its core goals. Addressing pre-weatherization barriers for customers participating in the demonstration was discussed as a means of tying in additional funding. The representative from Clean Heat RI showed significant interest in this approach.

National Grid MA presented their EE workforce development programs. Mass Saves's current workforce development goals are to prepare a properly trained workforce for the increase in demand for clean energy jobs, ensure equitable access to workforce development opportunities, and develop a streamlined pathway to engage with WMBEs. One example of a current program is the Clean Energy Pathways Program. Its focus is to provide full-time paid, 3-month internships in HVAC and weatherization to create a consistent pipeline of entering workers. 23 interns have graduated from the program since its start this year, and 19 have received full time employment offers. 98% of interns thus far have resided in environmental justice communities, and 91% have reported as POC. Additionally, National Grid MA offers a WMBEs Summit each October.



The EWG gave feedback on the presentation. The first topic of feedback was the burdensome process of acquiring a WMBE certification. The collective recommendation was a self-attestation process. The group suggested measuring equity targets in terms of percentage of dollars paid to WMBEs as opposed to percentage of jobs to ensure that the highest paying jobs are equitably distributed. Additionally, the EWG questioned the community outreach structure, as language is often not the only barrier in communication, but also trust in the outreach organization. The group agreed that building trusting relationships within the communities is a crucial aspect of engagement in the programs.

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## EC4 UPDATE

The EC4 Advisory Board convened on August 30th for a brief public meeting, followed by an executive session that was closed to the public. They began with updates from the EC4, which are as follows. At this meeting, the draft proposed spending plan and its associate public comments will be discussed. The state applied for a \$56 million climate resiliency grant. Other funding that Rhode Island will be leveraging includes the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, the Nova Grant, and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) money. It was noted that these funding streams would also be a topic of discussion at the September meeting.

A RIDEM climate justice specialist gave updates. DEM is finalizing its environmental justice policy shortly. The draft policy is available on the DEM website from May 2022. The associated environmental justice training for the EC4 and its advisory boards are slated to take place at the end of September. The climate justice specialist also announced that he and a colleague had submitted an abstract to the New England Recycling Conference (NERC) regarding the scaling of new recycling operations in environmental justice communities. They have just been notified of their selection, and they will be presenting at the conference in Providence from November 1st through November 2nd in collaboration with Groundworks Data. NERC stated that the abstract was the first submitted in its category as well as the first to be submitted by a Rhode Island entity. The abstract was summarized into the following, "Rhode Island communities will evaluate interventions to form with existing regulations that are related to a sustainable value chain, determining the capacity of existing facilities and how they are currently being scaled, whether these facilities serve the local population, and if the materials accepted are completely used for purposely little to no contamination."

The EC4 Advisory Board concluded the public portion of the meeting and began an executive session. The full EC4 will meet on September 29th at 9:30 am.

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