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Oregon confident of meeting carbon goals

By Jeff Barnard

Associated Press

GRANTS PASS (AP) — State officials and utilities say Oregon is in good shape to meet the lower carbon emissions goals for power plants set by President Obama's new plan for combating climate change.

The Clean Power Plan issued Monday by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets a goal of a 20 percent reduction from Oregon's 2012 levels.

Department of Environmental Quality climate change specialist Colin McConnaha says Oregon is already on track for major reductions, with the only coalfired power plant set to close in 2020 and utilities working on developing 25 percent of their electricity from renewable energy by 2025.

McConnaha notes the plan is 1,500 pages and it will take some time to determine details of how Oregon will act.

Gov. Kate Brown commended the president on taking steps to combat climate change.

"We have long been a leader in clean energy

development to the benefit of citizens in our state," she said in a statement. "Making smart energy investment decisions now is critical to building a more resilient and sustainable economy for the future."

Oregon has long worked to reduce carbon emissions. Though efforts to adopt a cap-and-trade system of reducing carbon emissions failed in 2009, Oregon signed an agreement with California, Washington and British Columbia in 2013 to put a price on greenhouse gas emissions and mandate the use of cleaner-burning fuels. This year, Oregon's low-carbon fuel standard was extended.

Oregon also calls on utilities to use renewable energy for 25 percent of their reduction.

Aside from Portland General Electric's Boardman plant, Oregon also buys coalfired power from other states.

Overall, coal accounts for a third of the electricity used in the state, with natural gas 12 percent and wind 5 percent, according to the Oregon Department of Energy. PGE spokesman Steve Corson said the utility has long felt reductions in greenhouse gas emissions were necessary.



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