



Michael Durham/Contributed Photo, File

Portland General Electric's Carty Generating Station in Boardman came in at No. 3 on a list Thursday, June 16, 2022, detailing Oregon's top 10 climate-polluting power plants.

More than half of state's dirtiest power plants are in this region

BY ANTONIO ARREDONDO
Hermiston Herald

Two Oregon environmental groups on Thursday, June 16, posted their findings for Oregon's most climate-polluting power plants, and the results look grim for plants in Umatilla and Morrow counties — at least for now.

Six of the top 10 dirtiest plants in the entire state are in the two counties, according to research from the Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center and Oregon State Public Interest Research Group Foundation.

"Climate change is here and already impacting lives," said Celeste Meiffren-Swango, state director at Environment Oregon. "We need to do everything we can to move away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy."

That action already has taken place in Boardman, where Portland General Electric Co. in 2021 dismantled the final coal-powered plant in the state. The pair of environmental groups rated it the dirt-

iest plant in Oregon in 2020.

The two sister groups looked at data from the Environmental Protection Agency's eGRID, a comprehensive database that shows the environmental characteristics of nearly all of the nation's power plants.

According to the report, Oregon's top 10 most climate-polluting plants in 2020 were responsible for 98.4% of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions from the power sector while generating 32.2% of total electricity. The total emissions of Oregon's top 10 power plants are 9.7 million metric tons, which is equivalent to 2 million cars on the road for a year.

While none of Oregon's power plants fell in the top 100 dirtiest in the country, this doesn't mean the power plants were in the clear. The top operating plant, Calpine Corporation's Hermiston Power Plant in Hermiston, produces more than 1.56 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

With coal plants out of the picture, next up could be natural gas plants.

These plants, mostly operated by Portland General Electric, also are changing.

"Our natural gas plants constitute a part of our generation fleet that is changing, and will continue to do so," Allison Dobscha, a spokesperson for PGE, said. "These plants will serve a different purpose in the future than they do today, serving more as capacity resources that can provide flexibility and reliability when needed."

The remaining nine plants on the list use methane gas, and the proposed shift away from gas to cleaner energy is something Meiffren-Swango is hopeful for.

"This list underscores how methane is an extremely potent gas," the Environment Oregon director said. "We will figure out better ways to power our lives before it's too late."

With Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signing a clean energy bill that promises 100% renewable energy for electricity by 2040, Meiffren-Swango said she believes that change is coming, and soon.

Merkley gets update on Pendleton food warehouse expansion

BY ANTONIO ARREDONDO
Hermiston Herald

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley was in Pendleton on Friday, June 17, to tour the food bank Community Action Program of East Central Oregon operates and find out more about expanding those efforts.

The CAPECO warehouse serves as a one-stop shop for low-income houses to receive the food that they need and sends goods to other local food banks, but the facility has its limits. CAPECO receives plenty of food from grocery stores and other resources — too much, in fact. The warehouse is not equipped to handle perishable foods and unable to receive food in bulk.

Merkley, a Democrat, secured \$2 million in community-initiated project funding for CAPECO to support the construction of a multi-use facility.

"I'm really glad we could procure funds for a place like this," Merkley said. "Food banks are near and dear to my heart."

CAPECO CEO Paula Hall said the CIP funds are going to be a springboard for the organization.

"It's something that I hope our community will be proud of and something for generations to come," she said.

With the closing of Pendleton's senior center, Hall said she sees the organization opening its doors to Pendleton's senior population as well. The warehouse at this time has no availability for such hopes.

Hall said CAPECO is looking at two lots in the Pendleton area to build a new warehouse. Moving the location would save the program \$25,000 a year and allow for more events.

"We really want the new building to be used by the community, not

just for our needs," Hall said.

The food center also will serve as a regional food bank, a communal place for seniors to have meals, a site to prepare home-delivered meals for homebound seniors and people with disabilities and more.

"Depending on the footprint we have," Hall said, "we could even have an outdoor garden for kids to see the plants grow and get their hands on them."

Other possibilities for the new location include kitchens for meals, washing stations for perishables and more storage for fresh and frozen food.

Merkley expressed his gratitude for Hall and her team's work. After the tour, he presented Hall with a flag flown at the U.S. Capitol as thanks for her work toward eliminating and destigmatizing hunger.

"You don't have to know anything about hunger, you don't even have to experience hunger," Hall said. "But you can be part of the solution."

Merkley on this swing through Eastern Oregon began the day at the Eastern Oregon Economic Summit in Hermiston, then in the early afternoon toured Echo's potable water system. The senator secured \$450,000 for the Echo as another community-initiated project through the fiscal year 2022 federal government funding package.

The funding will allow the city to replace aging service connections and update from old paper maps to a GIS digital mapping system of the new connections and corresponding valves. This modernized mapping will allow Echo to manage the system better and create an accurate digital system for all future related maintenance work, which will reduce the financial burden on Echo residents.

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