

<http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article37344525.html>

Buncombe is at the center of the NC Clean Power Plan

"The real discussion we need to be having in North Carolina is about nuclear power, and it is a discussion we are having," NC DEQ secretary Donald van der Vaart said at an event (9/21/15) hosted by the conservative John Locke Foundation. "[Nuclear] is really the dual plan to put in place in case we lose the [NC Clean Power Plan] litigation, because we need to leapfrog natural gas." – [Utility Dive](#)

We need to leapfrog to every energy conservation solution that saves on natural gas use, cleans up natural gas production, and slashes coal and conventional nuclear dependency, Secretary van der Vaart. Those 'other category' energy innovations that are more complex to systemize and challenging to educate decision makers and the citizenry about are nonetheless where great wealth and sustainability benefits lay for the future of North Carolina and the Union.

The North Carolina Clean Power Plan logic

There is no logic to resisting the benefits of a North Carolina Clean Power Plan (NC CPP) that arrives at the Presidential Climate Action Plan goals, takes lessons learned from across the nation and globe, and actually goes further on GHG cuts and related sustainability innovations. North Carolinians should be excited about helping to form the markets behind the climate change fight. Federal legislation like the Climate Protection Act of 2013 and other policies tie into the EPA Clean Power Plan strategy and form a sustainability innovation economy that will provide the tangibles for a better posterity.

There is a cost benefit ratio involved. The International Energy Agency states that avoiding the most dangerous 3.6 Fahrenheit threshold on anthropogenic climate change means investing \$44 trillion in CleanTech yields \$115 trillion in fuel savings globally. That's just the fuel savings versus any climate change risks avoided by earliest full action. There's a similar cost/benefit ratio for North Carolina's full participation in the climate change fight. But if my state is a drag on the effort, there are only greater risks and costs involved with each month of delay.

Just like Sec. van der Vaart's obsolete focus on conventional nuclear power, too many environmental groups are locked onto variable power sources like hydroelectric. The Sierra Club advertises geothermal, which adds up to heat pumps and passive thermal in North Carolina. These are what we might call 'in-fill' solutions but fail to form complete municipal systems. I am a Sierra Club member but their 'clean energy economy' vision needs to be augmented with Department of Energy and National Laboratories knowledge and subject matter expertise from the CleanTech marketplace.

Duke Energy gave us the NC CPP innovation target

[Duke Energy's WNC Modernization Project](#) is a \$1.1 billion opportunity to launch the NC CPP. That is if we choose to see things that way, and as a UNC system graduate with enough knowledge to know either way, I say go there... and fast. A handful of the right mavericks can help turn the corner. I would agree there are national implications to the strategy I detail here. When we imagine North Carolina being a sustainability leader that exports our technology and expertise both across the nation and globe, our global impact and benefits gained raise greatly.

However there is no benefit to staying locked in the past. Literally none.

A highly educated response to the oversized Duke Energy 650 megawatt combined cycle natural gas (NGCC) plant proposed for Buncombe County is needed. I have proposed a 200 MW NGCC plant for Asheville supported by maximized smart grid, distributed energy, and efficiency solutions like stationary fuel cells and demand response managed by third parties. There are policy changes needed and plenty of new leadership opportunities involved. A lot of that is set to go.

We can get the needed support to get these highly technical matters right, and get the NC CPP in motion. But the North Carolina community will have to demonstrate some teamwork and willingness to look both inside and outside our borders for the best innovation roadmap.

Observing North Carolina's politicians, appointed officials, and non-government institutions wander around critical issues like anthropogenic climate change and grid modernization is more than alarming and humiliating. These 'leaders' form the risks at this point. It is their reticence versus any data vagueness that now creates the real harm. A new platform for responsible sustainability innovation is needed.

Let's use our freedoms and start the NC CPP R&D work now

Instead of pausing for full legislated State of North Carolina buy-in and funding for a large NC CPP budget this year, North Carolina's existing CleanTech innovation ecosystem, modern civic engagement techniques plus 'social business' innovation management, all supported by widely available current research on climate change and grid modernization issues wrapped around proven program start-up practices gets the NC CPP in motion. It does take something in the way of will and resources, but I hope there are enough of us ready to go now.

Please join me in resolving these efforts as each North Carolina municipality needs to pull together as the Paris climate talks start and the UN Sustainable Development Goals need support. Whether or not you are concerned only about climate change, economic development, or transmission lines and substations, for those willing to work as a team we will make greater headway that way.

<http://www.innovograph.com/ig-blog/smart-grid-deep-webinars/>

The opinions on the NC CPP over the past couple of years have been interesting. But now is the time to act.

About the author

Grant Millin has Master of Project Management and Master of Entrepreneurship degrees including studies for an MBA with Western Carolina University. He has a BA Interdisciplinary Studies, Independent Degree in Sustainability and Security Studies from UNC Asheville. He is a GroWNC consortium member, City of Asheville Community Energy Plan task force member, as well as a Leadership Asheville graduate.

Grant was the North Carolina project manager for the historic *Hydrogen Road Tour*. He produced and served as panelist on the *Forum on Smart Grid and Hydrogen Economies* at Duke University. Grant is an Asheville management consultant.

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