

TO: Columbia City Council

FROM: Columbia Climate & Environment Commission



DATE: June 23rd, 2026

SUBJECT: Columbia Water & Light 2026 Renewable Energy Plan

The City of Columbia Climate & Environment Commission is submitting this memo to the City Council in tandem with the Columbia Water & Light 2026 Renewable Energy Plan (REP). The purpose of this submission is to draw attention to some of the positive aspects of the City's continued investments in clean energy in addition to the Utility's reporting.

The 2026 REP reported, "...it is estimated that 23.5% of Columbia's electric portfolio will come from existing renewable sources in 2026", amounting to 286,837 MWH of energy usage. This means the City of Columbia is projected to divert 248,016 metric tons of carbon from going into the atmosphere this year—the equivalent of taking 57,851 gasoline-powered cars off the road for one year.¹

Furthermore, continued investments in clean energy help to offset future costs, both monetary and otherwise, accrued from the effects of climate change. Hotter temperatures, heavy rain and flooding, vector-borne diseases, and poor air quality are expected to be the most drastic climate change symptoms Columbia will experience in the coming years. Overwhelmed stormwater infrastructure can cause service disruptions, increased flooding, runoff into nearby waterways, severe property damage, transportation interruptions from flooded roads, and more. Additionally, 8.2% of homes face flood risk in the next 30 years.

These symptoms also yield a variety of health risks. Higher temperatures increase the risk of heat stroke, more mosquitoes mean an increase in vector-borne diseases, and poor air quality both causes and exacerbates existing respiratory issues.²

Climate change is costing the average U.S. household between \$400 and \$900 a year, largely from heating/cooling, insurance costs, and mortality risks.³ This makes up a greater portion of poorer households' income. The cost of climate policy action may already be less than household costs of climate change, which will likely increase in years to come.

In conclusion, the City of Columbia stands to gain much from continuing to invest in clean sources of energy. The Climate and Environment Commission applauds the steps that have been taken thus far towards the City's clean energy goals, and we look forward to the possibility of future clean energy opportunities.

¹United States Environmental Protection Agency. "Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator." *Environmental Protection Agency*, 2026.

²City of Columbia Office of Sustainability. "Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP) Update." *City of Columbia*, 2026.

³Shah, Simone. "How Climate Change is Making Your Life More Expensive." *Time Magazine*, 2026.