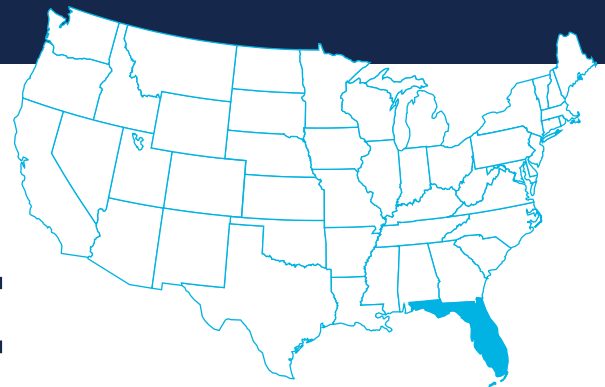




ISSUE BRIEF

FLORIDA'S CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE



Opportunities to Cut Carbon Pollution Under the Clean Power Plan

Florida has an opportunity to tap a well of economic growth that could provide new jobs, expand the economy, and help protect future generations from the worst impacts of a changing climate. That opportunity is clean energy, and one way for Florida to realize more clean energy growth in the coming years is through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan. Florida can cut a significant amount of carbon pollution by improving energy efficiency in homes and buildings and by continuing to increase the amount of power it gets from renewable sources like the sun and wind. These investments will create new clean energy jobs, protect people from the harmful health effects of air pollution, and save them money on their electric bills.

Climate change is a clear and present danger to Floridians' health and communities, bringing stronger storms, harsher droughts, and rising temperatures—most recently highlighted by findings that 2014 was, globally, the hottest year on record.¹ The National Climate Assessment, a recent report from 13 federal agencies, warned that human-induced climate change impacts are happening today, and worsening in every region of the United States.

Floridians face large public health and economic costs from climate change. About 1.6 million Floridians, nearly half of the state's total population, live less than 1 meter above the local mean high water level.² Even a few inches of sea level rise can pose a major threat to areas in southeast Florida. At that point the capacity of stormwater drainage systems will be impaired, leading to increased inland flooding during heavy rain events. In addition, rising sea levels can contaminate Florida's water supply, and in some parts of the state this has begun to occur. Officials in Hallandale Beach have already abandoned six of the town's eight drinking water wells.³ The costs of climate change are rising as well. Climate-related disasters in 2012 cost American taxpayers more than \$100 billion, or \$1,100 per taxpayer.⁴

OVERVIEW OF THE CLEAN POWER PLAN

For the sake of our children and generations to come, we have an obligation to reduce the dangerous carbon pollution that traps heat and is fueling climate change. The nation's fossil-fuel power plants are the single biggest source of carbon pollution in the United States, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the total. Today we limit mercury, lead, and soot from these power plants, but not carbon pollution. That is changing. On June 2, 2014, the EPA proposed the Clean Power Plan, which sets the first-ever standards limiting carbon pollution. The plan, when in place, would prevent the emission of about 550 million metric tons of carbon dioxide nationwide by 2030, and would cut power sector pollution 30 percent below 2005 levels.⁵

Nationwide, the Clean Power Plan can usher in climate and health benefits worth an estimated \$55 billion to \$93 billion in the year 2030, according to an EPA analysis; that includes preventing 2,700 to 6,600 premature deaths. These benefits far outweigh the estimated national costs of \$7.3 billion to \$8.8 billion in the year 2030.⁶ Additionally, the EPA's proposed carbon pollution standards will stimulate investment that puts Americans to work making our homes and businesses more energy efficient. The EPA estimates this projected increase in smarter energy use will shrink consumers' electricity bills by roughly 8 percent in 2030 nationwide.⁷

Putting carbon pollution limits on power plants also will give the United States leverage in the international community to elicit strong commitments to reduce pollution from countries around the world. Already, the Clean Power Plan proposal helped the United States reach a landmark agreement in November 2014 with China to reduce carbon pollution in both countries.

Energy efficiency investments reduce energy waste in homes and buildings, leading to smaller monthly electric bills while also cutting pollution. These investments create good-paying jobs as demand increases for manufacturers of efficient appliances, construction workers to build efficient homes and weatherize existing ones, and skilled technicians to do energy audits and install efficient technologies. In addition, as energy bill savings put more money into consumers' pocketbooks, there is increased spending on other goods and services—and associated job creation—across the economy.

FLORIDA'S CARBON POLLUTION TARGET

Every state, Florida included, has the opportunity to craft its own best strategy to reduce pollution and protect our climate. The EPA is expected to finalize the Clean Power Plan in the summer of 2015, and the following year each state must submit its initial plan to meet its pollution target. Investing in energy efficiency and renewable solar and wind power should be a fundamental part of Florida's strategy.

The Clean Power Plan proposal sets a state pollution reduction target by assessing four readily available methods (or "building blocks") for cutting pollution in each state. The target is expressed in intensity—pounds of carbon dioxide per megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity produced—and Florida is being asked to reduce its pollution intensity 38 percent by 2030. The four building blocks the EPA used to establish state targets are: 1) making coal-fired power plants more efficient by increasing the amount of electricity they generate from each ton of coal burned; 2) using natural gas power plants more effectively by dispatching them before coal plants; 3) increasing renewable energy growth, based on a growth rate already being met in the region; and 4) increasing energy efficiency (cutting energy waste) in homes and buildings, thereby reducing the amount of energy that must be generated from fossil fuels to power them.

While the carbon pollution *targets* are based on these building blocks, states can meet the standards with any variety of policies and resource choices. The Clean Power Plan puts Florida in the driver's seat, with flexibility to design a plan based on its energy mix, to chart a low-carbon path forward.

LESS POLLUTION, MORE JOBS, LOWER ELECTRIC BILLS

Cutting carbon pollution will create benefits to Florida's consumers on their electric bills and will boost job growth in the state. According to a Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) analysis, setting a standard to reduce more carbon pollution than the EPA's current proposal would do even more to create jobs and reduce consumer energy bills.

If the state were to ramp up energy efficiency and renewable power to the higher but still relatively modest levels NRDC analyzed, **Florida would see the creation of 10,000 new jobs**, while its households and businesses would **save \$48 million on their electric bills** in 2020.^{8,9} Because of the

benefits to electricity consumers and to job growth, NRDC recommended during the public comment period that the EPA require more pollution reductions nationally than currently in the Clean Power Plan proposal.

GRID RELIABILITY IN FLORIDA

In the 40 years since the passage of the Clean Air Act, our country has been able to dramatically reduce pollution while keeping the lights on and costs low. Utilities and regulators plan ahead to meet changing electricity needs. Smart grid planning, coupled with supply- and demand-side investments, will position utilities to be able to fulfill electricity demand while states implement the Clean Power Plan. In recent years, billions of dollars have been invested in new transmission infrastructure to make sure electricity can be distributed wherever and whenever it is needed. Energy efficiency savings continue to temper demand, which makes it easier for utilities and regulators to ensure adequate electricity supplies.

Moreover, since 2005, changes in Florida's power supply and state policies have already resulted in a 12.4 percent reduction in carbon pollution from power plants.¹⁰ Increases in energy efficiency and renewable energy have displaced fossil generation, and lower-cost natural gas generation increasingly has displaced coal-fired power plants. The grid has easily accommodated these changes through management and planning. These examples bode well for maintaining electricity reliability while cutting carbon pollution under the Clean Power Plan.

In addition, renewable energy can actually increase reliability of the electric grid. Thanks to more precise weather forecasts and improved technologies, utilities are increasingly able to predict renewable energy power output while maintaining reliability. Solar power can be used to help stabilize the grid with high-quality power.¹¹ Unlike fossil generation and nuclear sources, which can have large, abrupt, and unpredictable changes in electricity output, changes in solar and wind generation tend to be gradual and predictable.¹² This means that solar and wind need less backup generation than fossil fuels or nuclear sources. Thanks to management, planning, and improved grid technologies, Florida can cut pollution, increase energy efficiency, and add renewable energy capacity while maintaining a strong and reliable electric grid.

THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR IN FLORIDA TODAY

With extensive use of air conditioning during hot summer months and electric heating during the winter, the average Florida household spends \$1,900 every year on electricity—40 percent more than the U.S. average.¹³ Figure 1 shows that most of this electricity is generated from natural gas, which accounted for 62 percent of Florida’s generation in 2013. The rest is generated from coal (21 percent), nuclear (12 percent), non-hydro renewables (2 percent), and other resources including oil (3 percent).¹⁴

Although coal makes up only 21 percent of generation, it also emits a greater amount of carbon pollution than other energy sources: In 2012, 44.6 percent of the 120 million tons of carbon pollution from the state’s power sector came from coal-burning units.¹⁵ In addition, Floridians spent more than \$1.3 billion to import out-of-state coal to meet their electricity needs in 2012.¹⁶

With most of Florida’s electricity generated from natural gas, hurricanes and extreme weather events pose large risks for natural gas delivery disruptions and grid reliability issues. Fortunately, the state has significant untapped energy efficiency potential and one of the best renewable energy resources in the country in solar. Both energy efficiency and renewable energy can help alleviate this reliability risk.

Florida has the third-best solar resource potential in the nation.¹⁷ It has been estimated that rooftop and ground solar PV installations alone could meet more than 70 percent of the state’s energy needs.¹⁸ While Florida has enormous renewable energy potential, renewables currently provide less than 3 percent of the state’s electricity.¹⁹ In fact, the Sunshine State’s largest utility, Florida Power & Light, generates less than 1 percent of its power from solar, though

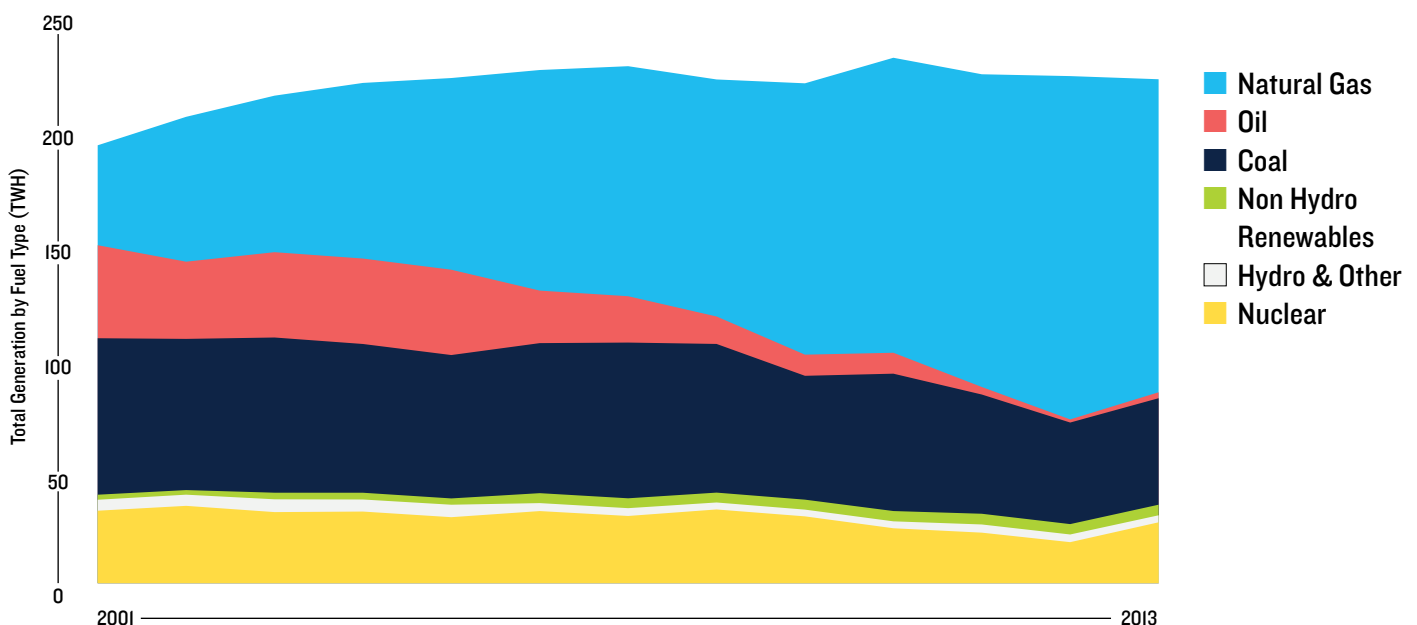
in January 2015 the company announced its intent to triple the amount of solar on its system by 2016.^{20,21}

As shown in Figure 2, energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies are zero-carbon, low-cost options that can help meet the goals of the Clean Power Plan. In the Southeast, energy efficiency is the lowest-cost resource; electricity savings can be achieved at costs well below the expense of new generation, resulting in lower retail electricity bills for homes and businesses—particularly if utility energy efficiency programs are well designed and well implemented to capture all cost-effective savings. Further, with technological advances and taller wind turbines that have improved performance, wind power has become competitive with new natural gas plants in many parts of the country.^{22,23} Solar power also is becoming increasingly competitive as the costs for solar panels rapidly decline, and most analysts expect that these costs will continue to fall over the next decade.²⁴ Additionally, a recent Deutsche Bank report predicted that distributed solar power would be cheaper than average retail electricity prices in Florida by 2016, even without the 30 percent federal Investment Tax Credit.²⁵

To help reduce its need for fossil fuel power, Florida already has taken steps toward using energy efficiency as a resource through the passage of the Florida Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act (FEECA) of 1980. FEECA directs the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) to set goals for peak demand and annual energy consumption reductions and will result in more than 14.5 million MWh of savings by 2022, enough energy to power 13,500 Florida households for a month.²⁶

Through FEECA, Florida’s investor-owned utilities performed more than 206,000 residential audits in 2012 (about 3 percent of residential customers), offered more

FIGURE 1: FLORIDA’S ELECTRICITY GENERATION SOURCES (2001–2013)



Source: Energy Information Administration

FIGURE 2: COSTS OF ELECTRICITY GENERATION BY SOURCE (\$/MWH)

Energy efficiency is the cheapest of all energy resources. Wind and utility solar PV are competitive with new natural gas combined cycle plants.

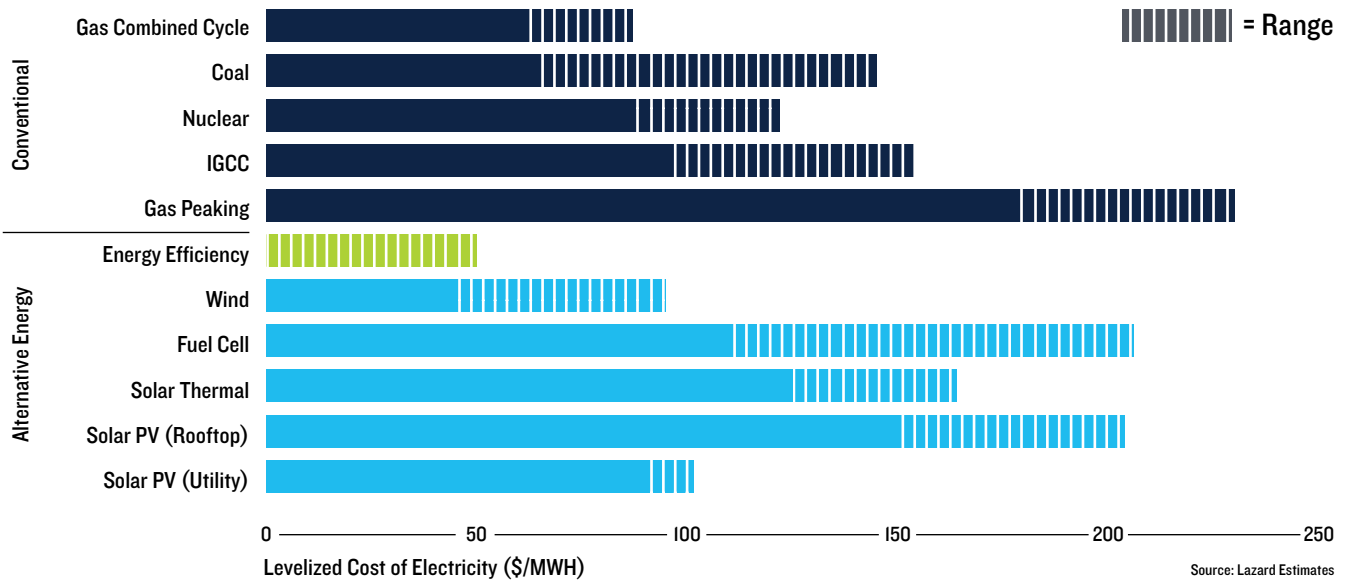
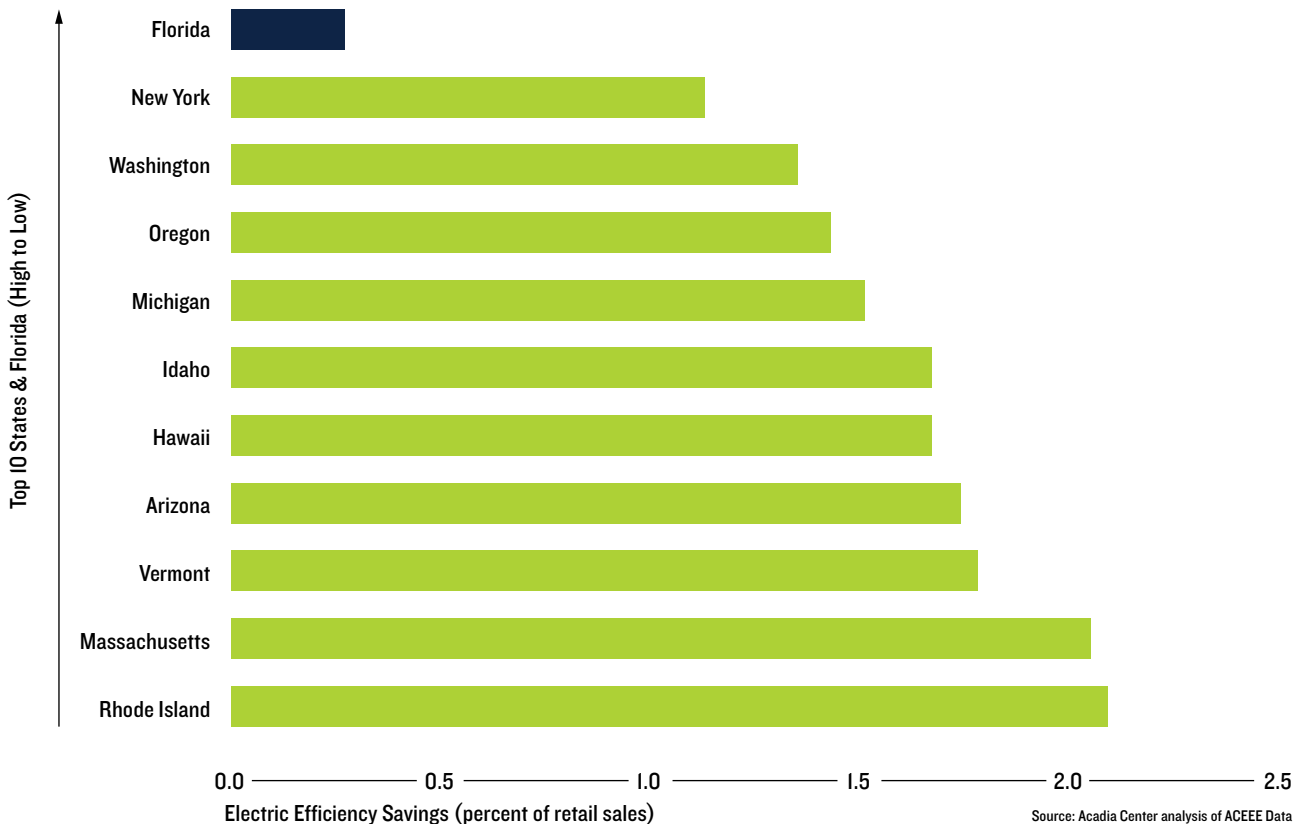


FIGURE 3: FLORIDA'S ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Comparison with the 10 states with the highest energy efficiency rates. Florida ranked 37th as of 2013.



than 100 programs to help households and businesses conserve energy, and invested more than \$387 million in efficiency programs (or about 1 percent of utility revenues).²⁷ However, as shown in Figure 3, these projects resulted in annual energy savings of only 0.27 percent—less than one-fourth the savings realized by each of the top 10 states in the nation and ranking Florida 37th among all the states.²⁸ One of the top 10 states, Hawaii, actually spent less money—as a portion of utility revenue—on energy efficiency programs than Florida did, and two others, Michigan and Arizona, had only slightly higher spending than Florida.²⁹ In addition, the Florida PSC recently approved proposals by the state’s electric utilities to slash their spending and savings goals by 97 percent in 2015. This is despite the fact that a recent study by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) estimated Florida could meet up to 30 percent of its forecast electricity demand through energy efficiency and renewable energy investments.³⁰

Florida has the opportunity to expand its solar programs and offset the need for polluting generation. Despite its large renewable energy potential, Florida is now in the minority of states that have yet to adopt a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). An RPS would encourage the growth of clean energy by requiring utilities to generate a certain percentage of their power from renewable sources.³¹ Florida also lacks many other state-level incentives for advancing clean energy in the state but did implement net metering in 2008.³² Even without supportive state policies, clean energy investments have resulted in significant benefits to the state economy and workforce. Some 1,470 MW of renewable generation is currently operating in Florida, with an additional 966 MW planned.³³ The renewable energy and energy efficiency goals in the state have created more than 14,000 clean energy businesses that employ more than 130,000 Floridians. More than two-thirds of these new clean energy businesses are small and local, employing fewer than 10 people each.³⁴ In 2014, the clean energy economy grew by 6 percent (7,500 jobs), which is more than double the state’s overall job growth. Environmental Entrepreneurs expects another 12,000 clean energy jobs will be added in 2015, an increase of 9.2 percent. With policies that remove market barriers and provide incentives for clean energy development, Florida could greatly expand its clean energy economy.

The Clean Power Plan provides Florida with an opportunity to develop a strong clean energy economy by implementing new standards for renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency. By crafting a state plan that prioritizes and captures the bountiful renewable energy and energy efficiency potential in the state, Florida could create even more jobs and grow its economy, all while helping protect public health and well-being.

A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE FOR FLORIDA

Florida is well positioned to meet its carbon pollution target. The state can build on its clean energy progress thus far, and increase its commitment to energy efficiency and renewable energy like solar and wind, as it creates its carbon pollution reduction plan. More pollution-free resources like solar and wind would allow more flexibility for Florida’s generation fleet under the state’s pollution target and would provide a buffer against potential fuel price volatility. **Investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy is the key to Florida’s pollution reductions and clean energy future.**

STATES CAN CHOOSE FROM A RANGE OF POLICY APPROACHES

A smart, effective, and forward-looking Florida plan can reduce market barriers that may hinder the development of clean energy. Table 1 shows the policy options available to states under the flexibility provided by the EPA’s Clean Power Plan and offers recommendations for how states can achieve economic and environmental benefits as they cut carbon pollution. While the Clean Power Plan is based on “intensity” standards (lbs. CO₂/MWh), a state can choose a “mass-based” approach instead, meaning the state would commit to reducing pollution by a fixed amount (total tons CO₂). A mass-based approach would be relatively simple to administer and has similarities to existing Clean Air Act programs to reduce nitrogen oxides (NOx) and sulfur oxides (SOx). The power sector is already familiar with NOx and SOx standards that establish pollution allowances and trading.

The Clean Power Plan also provides states the option to pursue partnerships with other states to reduce carbon pollution. Regional approaches present a number of potential advantages over a single-state plan, such as consumer savings, reduced compliance costs, increased flexibility, and avoided electricity market distortions.

CONCLUSION

Florida’s leaders have an opportunity to chart a clean energy future. Under the proposed Clean Power Plan, states have incredible flexibility to design their own best, most cost-effective plan to cut carbon pollution. Florida will be required to submit an initial state plan to the EPA in 2016 to demonstrate how it will reduce carbon emissions from its power plant fleet. Energy efficiency is the lowest-cost resource Florida can use to cut carbon pollution and create thousands of new, homegrown jobs.

Florida’s energy future rests in its hands. The Clean Power Plan presents the state with the opportunity to improve public health, foster new economic development, and help stabilize our climate.

TABLE I. STATE POLICY OPTIONS FOR CLEAN POWER PLAN COMPLIANCE.

States have ample flexibility under the Clean Power Plan to choose the best method to reduce pollution.

	Flexible Intensity-based	Mass-based with Trading	Carbon Fee	Portfolio/Resource Standards
Environmental Goal, Units, & Outcome	State has emissions intensity goal in pollution per unit of electricity generated (lbs/MWh)	State has emissions limit in total, fixed amount (tons), regardless of amount of electricity generation	State establishes a carbon fee (\$/ton) at price estimated to deliver the emissions goal; price is fixed but emissions outcome is uncertain	State sets minimum requirements for efficiency and renewable resources at levels estimated to deliver the emissions goal
Market Structure & Trading	Fossil power plants that pollute above the intensity standard must buy credits from others that operate below the standard	State agency issues allowances (tons) equal to the emissions limit; allowances can be auctioned or allocated; fossil power plants have to hold an allowance for every ton of emissions	State agency estimates the carbon fee (\$/ton) needed to achieve the emissions goal; revenue could be returned to utility customers through rebates, energy efficiency investments, or other state goals	Eligible resources are identified (i.e., efficiency and renewables) and energy (MWh) is tracked using generator certificate tracking systems; the distribution utilities need enough certificates to show they are meeting the required standard
Electric System Reliability	All of these market-based approaches provide significant flexibility for plant operators, grid operators, and regulators to ensure that reliability requirements are met. If a plant is needed in the short term it can keep operating by buying allowances or credits or by paying a fee. A unit could be designated as “must-run” for reliability reasons until the reliability constraint is addressed, and other facilities would adjust their performance to accommodate the output from that plant.			
Regional Approaches:	<p>There are significant benefits associated with states pursuing consistent regional approaches to compliance. The primary benefits are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) LOWER COST—A larger market should be more efficient and reduce costs 2) EQUAL TREATMENT—Generators, market participants, and consumers should face consistent market signals, costs and benefits 3) IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOME—Regional approaches avoid different price signals across a market region and on either side of state boundaries. This would help avoid emissions leakage and higher national emissions than anticipated 4) REMOVE OR REDUCE RELIABILITY CONCERNS—A larger market and additional flexibility further reduces reliability concerns 			

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