

# CEEPC Monthly Updates – May 2014

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*Events, News & Announcements related to Climate, Energy, & Environment in the Washington Region*

## Events

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Please bookmark MWCOG's Energy Calendar:

<https://ncportal.mwcog.org/sites/surveys/climate/Lists/Calendar/calendar.aspx>

- ✓ May 28, 3pm: [ICLEI Call with the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities](#)
- ✓ May 29, 2pm: [ICLEI Solar Permitting & Inspection Summer Webinar Series](#) (part I)
- ✓ May 31-June 1: [Green Festival DC](#) (Convention Center, Washington, DC)
- ✓ June 8-10: [NARC Annual Conference](#) (Louisville, KY)
- ✓ June 12: [USEA Annual Energy Efficiency Forum](#) (Washington, DC)
- ✓ June 17, 12-1:30pm: [U.S. GHG Leadership for Paris 2015](#) (2000 K Street NW, Washington, DC)
- ✓ June 25-26: [Renewable Energy Finance Forum](#) (New York, NY)
- ✓ June 26, 2pm: [ICLEI Solar Permitting & Inspection Summer Webinar Series](#) (part II)
- ✓ June 27: [AAAS DC Energy & Data Summit](#) (1200 New York Ave, NW, Washington, DC)
- ✓ July 5: [AAAS: Climate Change Resilience – Governance and Reforms](#) (Washington, DC)
- ✓ July 6-10: [ASES National Solar Conference](#) (San Francisco, CA)
- ✓ July 10, 12-2pm: [DCEN Environmental Advocacy Award Ceremony](#) (1100 15<sup>th</sup> St NW, Washington, DC)
- ✓ July 14: [ELI Workshop on EPA's Proposed CAA Section 111\(d\) Rules](#) (Washington, DC)
- ✓ July 14-15: [2014 EIA Energy Conference](#) (JW Marriott, Washington, DC)
- ✓ August 27, 2pm: [ICLEI Solar Permitting & Inspection Summer Webinar Series](#) (part III)
- ✓ September 24-26, [EcoDistricts Summit](#) (Washington, DC) *[COG will host a pre-conference training Sept 23]*

## Climate, Energy, and Environment News

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**[Panel's Warning on Climate Risk: Worst Is Yet to Come:](#)** On March 31 the IPCC released a new report "[Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability,](#)" the Fifth Assessment by Working Group II. The report predicts dire impacts from climate change and notes that it may be too late to stop or reverse many of the process already underway, including melting ice caps, collapsing Arctic sea ice, stressed water supplies, intensifying heat waves and heavy rains, dying coral reefs, and migration or extinction of fish and many other creatures. The report is accompanied by a [Summary for Policymakers](#).

**[CA approves mortgage program to boost energy efficiency programs:](#)** On March 10, California approved a \$10 million mortgage reserve program to make property assessed clean energy (PACE) programs more bankable and

assuage FHFA's concerns by reducing risk for mortgage lenders. The reserve will backstop PACE programs that enable homeowners and commercial property owners to finance energy improvements via property tax payments over 5, 10 or 20 years. The reserve is managed by the California Alternative Energy and Advanced Transportation Financing Authority (CAEATFA), which was created by legislation in September 2013. A summary of the reserve program is available [here](#).

**[CA climate change fight results in utility bill credits:](#)** Starting in April, customers of California's big utility companies will receive "climate credits" on their utility bills twice a year. The small payments are raised from the state's cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas emissions. Amounts are small (about \$20-\$40) and will vary among utilities, since the formula takes into account each utility's number of customers and its costs of complying with the cap and trade program. RGGI has a similar "direct bill assistance" program to help cover utility costs for low income families. California's credits are intended to make the public more invested in the climate fight and to minimize the net impact of the carbon trading system for ratepayers.

**[Supreme Court Upholds EPA Cross-State Air Pollution Rules:](#)** On April 29, the Supreme Court upheld the EPA's authority to regulate cross-state air pollution rules (CSAPR), also known as the Clean Air Act's "good neighbor" provision or the "Transport Rule." The 6-to-2 ruling bolsters the administration's new regulations aimed at cutting pollution from coal-fired power plants. Under CSAPR, 28 Midwestern and Appalachian states will be required to cut power plant emissions of ozone-forming compounds including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and particulate matter that become airborne and travel downwind into neighboring states. Power utilities and 15 states had filed suit against the law.

**[Fossil Fuel-Free Index Will Help Investors Manage Climate Risks:](#)** FTSE Group, BlackRock and the Natural Resources Defense Council are putting together a new 'fossil fuel free' investment index, which would help potential investors divest in shares from companies linked to fossil fuels such as oil, coal or natural gas. The groups are developing the index in response to demand highlighted by initiatives such as 350.org's divestment campaign, and the concept of carbon stranded assets pioneered by the Carbon Tracker initiative, which contends that fossil fuel companies are overvalued by stock markets because their valuations include assets that cannot be exploited if we are to avoid runaway climate change.

**[ACEEE Report Says Energy-Efficiency Can Cut 26 Percent of GHG Emissions from Power Plants:](#)** A [new study](#) by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) outlines how energy efficiency could be used in an upcoming standard by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reduce CO2 levels with no net cost to the economy. The study shows how EPA could use four common energy efficiency policies to set a carbon pollution standard to reduce emissions 26% below 2012 levels. In 2030, these policies would save 600 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions, save over 925 million MWh of electricity, reduce electricity demand by 25%, and avoid the need for 494 power plants.

**[Climate Disruptions, Close to Home:](#)** The latest [National Climate Assessment](#), released on May 6, is an exhaustive and alarming report of present and future impacts of climate change on the United States. The NCA is produced by scientists from academia, government and the private sector, and is generally seen as the definitive statement on climate change nationally. Crippling droughts will become more frequent in drier regions; torrential rains and storm surges will increase in wet regions; sea levels will rise and coral reefs in Hawaii and Florida will die. Furthermore, the report finds, conclusively, that climate change impacts are *already* happening at measurable scale, and are having dire consequences for American communities.

**Local Governments Sued Over Lack of Climate Preparedness:** Illinois Farmers Insurance Co. is suing Chicago and about 200 nearby towns for failing to prevent climate change-related flooding in what could be a landmark case in the effort to stop climate change. In the spring of 2013, the Chicago area was hit by extreme rain which overwhelmed the aging sewer system and caused sewage and stormwater to inundate local waterways, leading the Governor to declare a state of emergency. Farmers Insurance claims that local municipalities knew climate change was causing heavier rains, and knew that their drainage systems were inadequate, and failed to take reasonable action to prevent flood damage. The company is seeking reimbursement for claims paid to homeowners for flood-related damage.

## **Regional Updates**

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**Pepco agrees to be sold to Chicago's Exelon:** Pepco Holdings will be acquired by nuclear energy giant Exelon, owner of Constellation Energy Group/BGE in Maryland, Commonwealth Edison in Illinois and Peco Energy in Pennsylvania. Before being final, the deal will require approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the public service commissions in three states and the District of Columbia, and an antitrust review by the Justice Department and the Federal Trade Commission. This latest takeover bid marks another step toward the reintegration of regulated utilities with power generation companies and would cement Chicago-based Exelon's hold on the Mid-Atlantic power market.

**125 million gallons of sewage dumped in Anacostia River:** Water from Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling is treated before being released into the Anacostia River. But most of the city's runoff from recent rains were combined with raw sewage – about 125 million gallons worth, not including all the trash. Trash clogs storm drains which get backed up, causing overflow. The Anacostia Watershed Society is trying to prevent trash pollution with traps, but in heavy rains trash still gets through the traps.

**D.C. region named one of the 10 most polluted in U.S.:** The American Lung Association's 2014 State of the Air report ranks the D.C. area eighth out of 277 metropolitan areas for high-ozone days. Ozone levels nation-wide decreased 14% from 1990-2012, but D.C. has only moved up on the most ozone-polluted regions list. In 2013, it ranked ninth; in 2012 it was 13th. Ground-level ozone, also known as smog, is formed by a chemical reaction that happens when air pollutants, such as those found in vehicle exhaust or factory emissions, react with sunlight. Ozone exposure can cause or aggravate asthma and respiratory inflammation, and leads to increased hospital admissions and increased daily mortality. Health advocates say officials need to prioritize reducing emissions from the major polluters: coal-burning power plants and transportation.

## **Washington, DC**

**D.C. Adopts Innovative New Green Construction Code:** On March 26, Mayor Gray announced adoption of the D.C. Green Construction Code, which was developed with input and support of local experts and stakeholders. The codes are based on the 2012 International Green Construction Code (IgCC) and include a locally-amended ASHRAE Standard 189.1. The 2013 D.C. Green Construction Code applies to all commercial projects greater than 10,000sq ft. and multifamily residential buildings four stories or higher, and affects projects major renovations as well as new construction.

**D.C. calls for contractors to install solar panels on 49 city buildings:** On March 25, the District Department of General Services (DGS) issued an RFP for solar installations on 49 municipal buildings, including 37 schools. The buildings use 86.4 million kWh per year. By laying solar panels across 10,355 sq. feet of roofs and carports, DGS

expects to generate 12.2 million kilowatt hours, offsetting 14% of the buildings' annual energy consumption. The District plans to enter into a 20-year power purchasing agreement for all of the power produced by the panels at a fixed price to reduce volatility in the city's operating costs.

**Ward 5: Just How Dirty Is Ivy City's Air?** Ward 5's Ivy City neighborhood is in a battle with city officials over a proposed bus parking lot that residents say is an air quality and environmental justice issue. The neighborhood and air quality researchers in the District agree that the area shares a disproportionate number of air-polluting facilities such as bus and truck parking lots. Ivy City is already home to parking lots and vehicle maintenance centers for D.C. public school buses and the Department of Public Works. Over a year ago, Empower DC filed a lawsuit asking the D.C. superior court to halt construction of the new bus depot. The court ruled in favor of Empower DC and residents, but the city appealed the decision. Both sides are now awaiting decision on appeal.

**EPA Releases Top 25 List of Cities with Most Energy Star Buildings:** Washington, DC has the second highest number of Energy Star certified buildings among large metropolitan areas in the country, according to EPA's release. Nationally, more than 23,000 buildings earned EPA's Energy Star certification by the end of 2013, saving more than \$3.1 billion on utility bills and preventing greenhouse gas emissions equal to the annual electricity use from 2.2 million homes.

**WUWA: Amtrak Goes Green:** On Earth Day April 22, Amtrak unveiled a repowered switcher locomotive at Union Station. Unlike existing switchers with one large engine that idles continuously when in service, the repowered switcher has two smaller, independently controlled engines that shut down when not needed. This engine configuration will cut fuel consumption by about half, and lower air pollutant emissions by up to 90%. The project was made possible through a grant given to COG under the EPA's National Clean Diesel Funding Assistance Program. The locomotive is the latest product of COG's work to reduce harmful emissions and clean the region's air.

**DC's Troubled Trash Can Replacement Efforts:** On May 20, the District admitted that about one-third of the trash and recycling bins picked up in the previous week's "blitz" were taken to a landfill instead of recycled, as the City had said they would be. DC began to distribute new bins in February, as a result of a report detailing the poor condition of trash and recycling bins in the City. Delivery ramped up before the primary election on April 1, but some old cans were not picked up for several weeks. Following many complaints from residents, the Department of Public Works announced a "blitz" to pick up these extra cans.

**Suit against D.C. gas magnate tossed, but city vows to fight for consumers:** On May 21, a D.C. judge threw out a lawsuit brought by the city's Attorney General that sought to break a gas station magnate's control on prices, ruling the District does not have standing to bring such an action. The decision will allow Capitol Petroleum Group owner Eyob "Joe" Mamo to keep in place "exclusive supply agreements" that require 27 independent operators who run gas stations he owns to purchase gasoline from his distribution company. Council member Mary Cheh is working with the Attorney General's office and plans to introduce legislation that would give the city standing to continue to press its claim.

## **Maryland**

**Maryland passes crowdfunding exemption:** On March 25, Maryland passed legislation allowing small businesses to raise debt capital from Maryland residents, up to \$100,000 in any given year. Individual investors' donations are capped at \$100 to minimize their risk. By allowing borrowers to pay investors' interest, the new

law encourages Maryland residents to see this as an opportunity to benefit businesses in their communities as well as their own finances. The law will go into effect as of October 1, 2014.

**[Montgomery County Council Passes Nine Environmental Bills:](#)** On Earth Day April 22, Montgomery County Council passed nine pieces of environmental legislation sponsored by CEEPC Chairman Roger Berliner. The bills include measures to increase the number of EV charging stations, streamline permitting for solar projects and EV charging stations, increase the permissible size for solar arrays, and a measure making Montgomery the first County in the county to adopt an energy benchmarking and disclosure law. The Council also moved to increase the amount of renewable energy the County purchases from 30% currently to 100% by 2016.

## Virginia

**[Dominion Virginia Power completes rooftop solar project, largest in Virginia:](#)** On April 22, Dominion completed installation of more than 2,000 solar panels on the rooftop of Canon Environmental Technology, Inc., in Gloucester, making it the largest rooftop solar system in Virginia. The project is part of Dominion's Solar Partnership Program to lease space for solar, and will generate more than 500 kilowatts of electricity, enough to power approximately 125 homes.

**[Virginia budget situation worsens:](#)** On May 19, Virginia officials disclosed a \$300 million shortfall in state revenue collections, putting the state's stellar bond rating in jeopardy and placing new pressure on lawmakers and Gov. Terry McAuliffe to break the budget deadlock. The regular session concluded on March 8 without passage of a budget, prompting the General Assembly to enter a special budget session. The central cause of the impasse is whether to expand Medicaid to an additional 400,000 Virginians. Under the Affordable Care Act, the federal government would pay for the expansion for three years, after which Virginia would have to pay 10% of the bill.

## Congress & Federal Update

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**[Waters of the United States:](#)** On March 25, the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers released a proposed rule to clarify protections for streams and wetlands under the Clean Water Act. The proposed rule is designed to protect waters that are vital to public health, the environment, and the economy, as well as to reduce costs and minimize delays in the permitting process. The proposed rule will be open for public comment for 90 days. You can watch Administrator McCarthy explain the proposal [here](#).

**[Federal Strategy to Reduce Methane Emissions:](#)** On March 28, the White House released its Strategy to Cut Methane Emissions, a component of the Climate Action Plan. The strategy includes efforts to address methane emissions in landfills, coal mines, agriculture, and the oil and gas sector. Administration estimates show that such strategies could deliver greenhouse gas emissions reductions up to 90 million metric tons in 2020.

**[Clean Energy Grants for Small Businesses:](#)** On March 20, as part of its Clean Energy Manufacturing Initiative, the Department of Energy awarded \$17 million in Small Business Innovation Research grants to support prototype technology to improve energy efficiency in manufacturing, cut the cost of clean energy installation, and support additional renewable energy generation.

**[Partisan sabotage in the Senate unplugs Shaheen-Portman bill:](#)** On May 12, partisan bickering in the Senate again doomed the Shaheen-Portman energy efficiency bill. For years, both parties in Congress have agreed that

the country should waste less energy and that the federal government should set an example in promoting efficiency. Senators Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) authored an energy efficiency bill that garnered bipartisan support. When the bill came to the floor, Republicans insisted on adding amendments to force the approval of the Keystone pipeline and limit the effectiveness of EPA's power plant regulations. Majority Leader Harry Reid refused to allow any amendments to the bill, causing Republicans to filibuster.

[Senate Blocks \\$85 Billion Tax Cut Bill Because It Would Have Helped Wind Energy](#): On May 16, an \$85 billion tax package that included reviving the Production Tax Credit (PTC) a key subsidy to the wind energy industry, was struck down by the Senate, after Majority Leader Harry Reid refused to let Republicans offer an amendment that would have killed the wind subsidy altogether. The tax extenders vote was not on the bill itself but on a substitute amendment to H.R. 3474, the legislative vehicle for the tax extender package. The amendment can be called up again later, but it does not look like that will happen any time soon.

## Research Articles and Reports

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[Galvanizing Clean Energy Investment in the United States](#): this new report from the Center for America Progress proposes action and leadership by the Obama administration to drive continued investment in the clean energy sector. The report recommends: (1) Use forthcoming power plant standards to drive clean energy investment, (2) Attract foreign direct investment, or FDI, in new projects in the clean energy sector, (3) Expand the use of existing financial instruments, (4) Increase clean energy worker-training programs.

[Power outages due to weather have doubled since 2003](#): A new report from Climate Central, shows that weather-related power outages increased ten-fold from 1984-2012. Virginia and Maryland rank 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> on the list of states with the most weather-related outages since 2003, and weather-related outages in D.C. have doubled since 2003. Dominion, Pepco, Baltimore Gas and Electric, and Allegheny were among the top 25 utilities with the most reported major weather-related outages from 2003-2012, nationally. The report points to an aging grid serving greater electricity demand, and an increase in storms and extreme weather events that damage this vulnerable system as the cause of the increase in recent years.

[Relieving electric vehicle range anxiety with nanotechnology-improved batteries](#): Researchers at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory may have discovered a way to increase the lifespan of batteries for electric vehicles. Lithium-sulfur batteries hold as much as four times more energy per mass compared to lithium-ion batteries, which would enable electric vehicles to drive farther on a single charge. However, lithium-sulfur batteries also produce unwanted side reactions that cut the battery's life. The researchers used a metal organic framework that prevents the sulfur cathode from disintegrating, which has potential to greatly extend the lifetime of the battery and therefore be suitable for use in EVs.

[Advanced Energy Technologies for Greenhouse Gas Reduction](#): This report from Advanced Energy Economy (AEE) describes a wide range of technologies and services offered by advanced energy companies that can help meet requirements for greenhouse gas reduction and simultaneously modernize America's aging electricity infrastructure.