



Testimony to Oregon Public Utilities Commission

Northwest Natural's General Rate Case

April 16, 2024

Chair Decker and Commissioner Tawney and Perkins, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Dr. Pat DeLaquil, and I am an energy system modeler and climate policy analyst. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of MCAT (Mobilizing Climate Action Together), which is a community of about 500 volunteers working on advancing a healthy climate and a green economy for future generations.

As I have testified to you during the recent NWN IRP docket, multiple reports from multiple groups studying potential long-term decarbonization pathways have consistently identified four core strategies to the most cost-effective and economically beneficial pathway:

1. Achieving 100% clean electricity generation
2. Converting our transportation fleets to electric vehicles
3. Converting our buildings and industry (where feasible) to electricity, and
4. Developing carbon-free fuels for long-term storage, reliability and hard to electrify applications.

These reports cover studies at the global regional and national levels, and were developed by organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change¹, the International Energy Agency², the Center for Strategic and International Studies³, and even people like Bill Gates⁴.

Unfortunately, NWN continues to promote the false promise to decarbonize its gas grid through biomethane, hydrogen and synthetic methane. The fact is that this gas decarbonization pathway has been repeatedly proven to have higher costs and greater technical risks compared to proven technologies for electrification – especially for space and water heating services in our buildings. Biomethane is a temporary and limited solution, hydrogen is dangerous and costly, and carbon-neutral synthetic methane is a pipe dream.

We should be discussing how we can gracefully age-out of our existing gas infrastructure in a way that maintains both the viability of the public utility and affordability for its end-of-life customers. Instead, we are here to resist the Company's efforts to sell its false promises.

In our opinion, NW Natural is not acting in the public interest and does not deserve an increase in its profit margins. Also, it also makes no sense to continue subsidies to any fossil fuel infrastructure, nor should we be incentivizing new buildings to connect to the gas system.

¹ Sixth Assessment Report: Working Group III: Mitigation of Climate Change - Summary for Policymakers, 2022

² [Net Zero by 2050 – Analysis - IEA](#)

³ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/climate->

⁴ How to Avoid a Climate Disaster, Bill Gates, Knopf, 2021, p154.

Finally, we shouldn't be governed by the past solutions. Low housing costs will mean nothing if we continue to ignore the climate crisis, especially with the escalating cost of gas and which saddles low-income customers with high bills and questionable redundancy.

We urge the Commission to not allow any portion of this rate request.

MCAT Steering Committee

Brett Baylor, Rick Brown, Linda Craig, Pat DeLaquil, Dan Frye, Debby Garman, KB Mercer, Michael Mitton, Rich Peppers, Rand Schenck, Jane Stackhouse, Joe Stenger and Catherine Thomasson