

To: Public Utility Commission
Re: NW Natural IRP

June 1, 2023

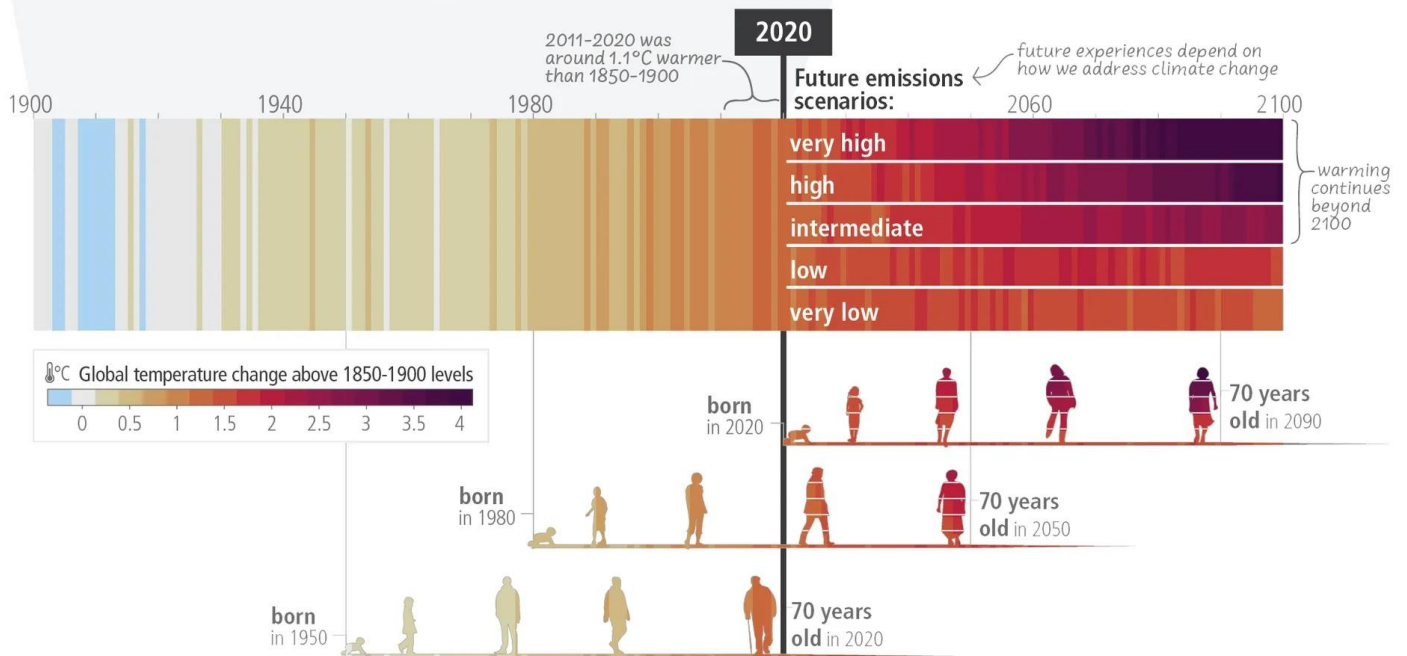
Chair Decker and Members of the Commission;

On behalf of Oregon parents and the youth in our care, we strongly urge the Commission to follow through with clear action on the findings of the Future of Gas fact-finding process.

Throughout human history, civilizations rise and fall – and ours is no different. It is critical that Oregon regulators grasp our predicament and make timely choices that set Oregon on a path away from combustion and toward safe, proven, and widely available technologies to power our buildings. Failure to do so dooms less affluent Oregonians, and all of our children and grandchildren to a life of suffering.

The global outlook in [the March IPCC report](#) is dire; see graphic below depicting the degree to which future generations will be impacted, depending on the policies we put in place today. Note how children born in 2020 may experience a world with temperatures anywhere from 4 degrees of warming (business as usual) to 1.5 degrees of warming (if we make hard choices now).

c) The extent to which current and future generations will experience a hotter and different world depends on choices now and in the near-term



For the first time, IPCC authors state that fossil fuel must be phased out. See page 20 of the [IPCC Summary for Policymakers](#) in section B.5:

B.5 Limiting human-caused global warming requires net zero CO2 emissions. Cumulative carbon emissions until the time of reaching net-zero CO2 emissions and the level of greenhouse gas emission reductions this decade largely determine whether warming can be limited to 1.5°C or 2°C. Projected CO2 emissions from existing fossil fuel infrastructure without additional abatement would exceed the remaining carbon budget for 1.5°C.

This means that humans not only need to stop investing in new fossil fuel infrastructure (such as NW Natural's proposal to extend gas lines in Forest Grove), we need to rapidly dismantle existing fossil fuel infrastructure.

Leadership is required at all levels of government – particularly relevant now that critical climate bills, which could have [leveraged federal dollars](#) 1:10 are stalled in the Legislature.

Hard-working Oregonians doing their best to make ends meet, children, and future generations are all counting on members of the Oregon Public Utility Commission to be skeptical about NW Natural proposals to continue piping combustible fuels *of any kind* into buildings at a time when governments across our planet are working hard to expedite the transition toward zero emission technologies.

As families, we are particularly concerned that thousands of Oregon children are being exposed to lung-damaging NO₂ and cancer-causing benzene in our homes. A [May 30 article in the NY Times](#) described researchers testing NO₂ levels in families' apartments climbing to five times the U.S. EPA's safety benchmark for one-hour exposure. Worse, this pollutant is [heavier than air](#), so it is hard to vent and settles near the floor, where young children are likely to play. It should be a crime for a corporation to permanently impair children's lung health and destroy their chances for a healthy future.

The Commission may not be tasked with public health, but please 1) consider the co-benefits of halting the expansion of methane/natural gas across our state and 2) be very skeptical about increasing the use of renewable methane/natural gas/hydrogen blends in buildings– which causes the same lung damage. Likewise, failure to grasp the seismic risks associated with NW Natural's operation in the Critical Energy Infrastructure Hub puts thousands of families and precious aquatic and forest ecosystems at risk. Isn't it time to phase out expansion in the CEI hub liquefaction zone?

Healthy corporations align themselves with the thriving of our civilization as a whole – *not* profits for shareholders, disregarding all other damaging impacts. That's why we count on OPUC to ensure utilities put public interest first and adapt to changing times. When it comes to buildings, Oregon gas utilities can choose to follow the lead of Northeast gas utilities in morphing toward emissions-free [networked geothermal heat/cooling](#) distribution, or cling to a carbon-based fuel distribution model and go out of business.

Please face the critical threats before us and make the necessary, hard decisions that will set our state on a zero emissions path that will benefit Oregonians of today and tomorrow. Our kids are counting on you.

Thank you,

Noelle Studer-Spevak, M.S., M.P.A.
Board Officer