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Conservation, Renewables and Technology Help Meet Electricity Needs

Utilities in the Pacific Northwest expect a significant increase in the need for electricity in the coming decade. Regional population growth and new technologies that rely on electric power will fuel this growing need.

It is the responsibility of the utilities to provide reliable power at the most reasonable cost, in an environmentally sound way. To that end, the plan is to diversify with alternative energy resources, intensify conservation and energy efficiency efforts and explore new technologies.

Traditional resources, hydropower and coal – which currently comprise 70 percent of our region’s resources – will continue to be a big part of the equation. Also, the use of natural gas, which has been on the rise, will continue to increase.

Development of wind power already tops the list of renewable resource projects and growth is expected to accelerate. Other new renewable technologies being explored include geothermal, solar, wave energy and biomass.

Renewable resources protect the environment, but also present challenges. Obstacles include significant cost and infrastructure needed to integrate renewables, transmission constraints and the need for back-up to provide reliability, e.g., other power sources for when the wind isn’t blowing or the sun isn’t shining.

Utilities are taking care of keeping the lights on while they augment conservation efforts and investigate new opportunities. One exciting new technology, which is in very early development, will enable demand response and our customers’ ability to affect their own electricity usage.

Check out the ***Plan Today Power Tomorrow*** regional energy project, www.pnucc.org

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