

Clean Power Coalition: Pleased with WEC coal-free announcement; concern about WE Energies' fossil fuel dependence remains

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Racine, WI – The Clean Power Coalition of Southeast Wisconsin (CPC) applauds WEC Energy Group's November 2 announcement that it plans to move off of coal as an energy source by 2035. However, WEC also stated that its subsidiary, We Energies, will make the shift to "natural" gas at its Oak Creek Power the Future units. This is a disappointment to concerned residents, plant neighbors and activists, who have been advocating for years for We Energies to invest in clean energy, and is out of step with the international efforts to curb climate change currently underway at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Scotland.

"Transitioning away from coal is a huge step in the right direction," stated CPC member Dana LaFontsee. "It's been clear for years that burning coal is uneconomic and detrimental to climate and health, and We Energies is finally catching up. While this shift is welcome news, We Energies' intentions to invest in gas, another fossil fuel, are unwelcome, particularly in light of President Biden's commitment to limit methane at COP26. Instead, We Energies should be investing more in renewable energy, storage options, and demand side changes that would provide economic benefits, reliable energy, good jobs, and healthy living environments."

CPC member Tom Rutkowski added, "We Energies, the company that built one of the country's last coal plants, took a step forward by announcing the retirement of their coal fleet by 2035, but the transition to gas makes the move a half step, not the full stride toward renewables that the climate crisis demands. The resources directed toward retrofitting coal plants to burn gas instead would be better spent in

a transition to renewable energy and battery storage.”

“It is good news that We Energies is planning to stop burning coal to generate electricity in 2035,” said Sister Janet Weyker, CPC member and former coal plant neighbor. “However, to replace coal with gas, another fossil fuel, is not the acceptable solution. Investment in 100% renewable energy and the creation of living-wage, clean jobs is what is needed to save the planet and the health of all living beings who depend on clean air and water.”

Eric Hansen, CPC Member, commented, “WEC seems to have reversed its inexplicable and long-standing no-can-do stance, and it now says its power plants will be coal free by 2035. Science, common sense, and the health of our community and planet tells us they should get the job done in 14 months, not 14 years. In addition, it is unacceptable that We Energies is swapping coal for another polluting, planet-killing fossil fuel: gas.”

Continued Hansen, “Today, we see the power of citizen action reflected in WEC’s announcement. We won’t stop until there is a clean power system that grows good jobs and doesn’t threaten our community’s health or our planet’s health. We won’t settle for anything less.”