



KySES Webinar Series

By Andy McDonald, KySES Board Member

KYSES has started offering a series of free educational webinars, featuring experts in the clean energy field. Our first webinar was held on August 28th and featured John Cotten of Wilderness Trace Solar and Matt Partymiller of Solar Energy Solutions. Their webinar addressed the status of rooftop solar in Kentucky, in light of the coronavirus pandemic and impending changes to net metering. The speakers provided insights into emerging technologies and the status of the first utility rate case that will address net metering, Kentucky Power Case # 2020-00174, which is now before the Public Service Commission. Each webinar will be recorded and made available for free at the KYSES website, www.kyses.org.

Wednesday, September 23, 12:00pm – 1:00pm

Cincinnati's 100% Renewables Commitment & the Green Cincinnati Plan

Presenter: Oliver Kroner, Sustainability Coordinator, City of Cincinnati

In 2018 the City of Cincinnati committed to a community-wide transition to renewable energy by 2035. Last year they announced plans to build a 100 MW solar facility to supply the City's electricity needs, the nation's largest City-led solar project. Oliver Kroner, the City's Sustainability Coordinator, will discuss these efforts and their Green Cincinnati Plan.

To Register: https://kyses_webinar2_2020.eventbrite.com/

Thursday, October 22, 12:00pm – 1:00pm via zoom

Louisville's 100% Renewable Energy Resolution

Presenters: Nancy Givens, Sam Avery, and Wallace McMullen of the 100% Renewable Energy Alliance of Louisville.

In February 2020 Louisville Metro Council voted in support of a resolution to meet 100% of Louisville's energy needs with renewable energy. What are the details of the Resolution? How did local citizens get it passed? How will it be implemented? What lessons were learned to help other cities move to 100% renewable energy?

To Register, visit www.kyses.org. Registration will be available later in September.

We encourage KySES supporters to get involved and help us to advance clean energy in Kentucky. Feel free to contact any Board Member to ask questions, comment on our efforts, and to get involved.



Kentucky Power Company Files First Rate Case Seeking to Change Net Metering Terms - KySES Joins Other Community Advocates to Formally Intervene in Rate Case

By Andy McDonald, KYSES Board Member

On May 29, 2020, Kentucky Power Company (KPC) filed a Notice of Intent with the Public Service Commission to open a general rate case. Their filing includes proposed changes to their net metering tariff which would sharply reduce the value of solar generation for their future net metering customers. It would place solar customers into a complicated time-of-use rate structure and would greatly under-value excess solar generation fed back to the utility.

KPC's filing also proposes large rate increases for residential customers - a 25% increase to both the fixed customer charge (rising to \$17.50 per month) and the energy charge (rising to \$0.12/kWh). During this time of economic crisis, with so many families struggling through the coronavirus pandemic, KYSES stands opposed to these large rate increases.

KySES will be co-intervening in the rate case along with the Mountain Association and Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC) and will be represented by Tom FitzGerald of the Kentucky Resources Council. Our petition to intervene was approved by the PSC on August 5, 2020, despite KPC's motion objecting to KySES' intervention.

KySES has joined the Mountain Association and KFTC to intervene in the rate case to advocate for fair solar net metering policies and reasonable rates for the customers of Kentucky Power. Formally intervening in the rate case allows KySES and its partners to fully engage in the ratemaking process with testimony, discovery, and cross-examination.

This is the first rate case filed by a Kentucky electric utility since passage of the controversial anti-net metering bill in 2019. SB100 directed the PSC to determine the net metering rates used to compensate solar customers, a measure solar advocates fear could lead to the devaluation of customer-owned solar energy and the suppression of Kentucky's emerging rooftop solar market. As the first rate case that will address changes to net metering, this case may establish precedent for how the PSC will handle the net metering issue for all of the state's regulated utilities.

According to KYSES member Seth Long, a resident of Ermine, Kentucky, the Executive Director of HOMES Inc., and a net metering customer of Kentucky Power, "Solar energy has enormous potential for the people of Eastern Kentucky. The cost of solar power has fallen 80% to 90% in the last 10 years, making it accessible to so many more people. Rooftop solar could help so many people in our area get control of their rapidly rising energy bills and gain some financial security. That's why I am so disappointed with Kentucky Power's proposal to cut the compensation rate for net metering and undermine their customer's ability to benefit from solar energy."

Concerned citizens may file public comments in this rate case. To send comments via email, include the case number (2020-00174) within the subject line and send to psc.info@ky.gov. Provide your full name and place of residence in the body of the e-mail. You can also mail your comment: Public Service Commission, 211 Sower Boulevard, Post Office Box 615, Frankfort, Kentucky, 40602-0615. Public comments, although accepted at any time, are suggested to be sent by the hearing scheduled for November 18-19, 2020. Case documents may be found at: https://psc.ky.gov/PSC_WebNet/ViewCaseFilings.aspx?case=2020-00174

For more information, please contact Andy McDonald, vice-chair, Kentucky Solar Energy Society, at 502-699-2553 or Andy@ApogeeClimate.org.

Never Waste a Crisis

By Kris O'Daniel, KYSES Board Member

COVID should amplify the beginning momentum for greening electrification. Since greening the grid contributes directly to a greener and healthier planet and is the one sure job-creating sector, this is where investment takes place to obtain an immediate and more vigorous economic recovery.

Climate change overlaid with COVID-19 should be a good starting point for finding better ways to electrify, serve all areas at affordable rates, - reasonable is a word of the past; performance is what counts. That's because rebuilding communities towards a healthier, more prosperous, and resilient future is the way to secure investments and better returns. Never before has energy been more critical to prosperity, communication, transportation, and survival. And never have we had a better menu of technical choices to select the right thing to feed into individual needs.

Kentucky utilities and the regulating authorities now need to take on additional roles focusing on performance measures to be part of a significant economic development that benefits their business opportunities. If they don't and stick to the same old track, they'll lose customers and investor interest. Over the five years 2012-2017, utilities lost 36% of their revenue from the industrial customer base.

Rules need to be adjusted and set, so they work toward the right goals, then the right things will follow, and keep the better momentum rolling. Utilities around the country are now investing in

diversified solutions like distributed energy combined with storage to perform with better electric services at a much lower cost and higher revenues. Their focus is on reliability and efficiency.

Utilities are investment machines that can choose to invest in the right infrastructure from customer-related energy efficiency investment like data technology and advanced metering to distributed energy resources and storage. But following traditional accounting methods, regulation in Kentucky has rewarded the utilities for capital growth like expensive infrastructure expenditures, and the conventional rate-structure then has allowed for a rate increase to recover capital expenses without looking at the overall performance.

Performance-based regulation is needed.

Letting utilities strive for capital investments without focusing on performance can be a costly affair for the customers and shareholders, as there are cheaper and other ways to go, better solutions. The utilities are improving their credit profile, focusing on areas with a more guaranteed rate of return, which is meeting clean energy goals, upgrading grid efficiency, and data collection, combining battery storage with distributed generation.

An innovative approach is all that's needed, and innovation often comes out of crisis. Utility data programs and services should be transparent, so data is actively collected, analyzed, and used as steering for how to achieve more efficiency and other needs. It's about producing desired outcomes most cost-effectively while expanding the customer base.

Rather than investing in expensive distribution lines, the utilities could provide storage in areas of risk, located at their substations or in homes with remote locations. At times that's the cheapest and the more economical solution. It would benefit both economic and environmental recovery and provide much-needed resilience at an affordable cost.

Looking at Kentucky's investor-owned utilities, Kentucky Power Company that serves Eastern Kentucky is leading this group with the highest electricity rates for residential and commercial customers and with the highest revenue per customer. Kentucky Power also is the leading utility in all of Kentucky with the highest amount of power outages. Customers in Eastern Kentucky would benefit from a performance-based regulation where everybody will benefit and progress, not only Kentucky Power shareholders.

Solar and Honey: Solar Farms Should Become Pollinator Habitats & Help Save the Bees

By Wallace McMullen, KySES Board Chair and Barbara Szubinska

Bees and other insects pollinate flowers, ensuring that plants reproduce and yield fruit and other products. Bees contribute to pollinating nearly 75% of all human food crops worldwide. But humans have put major stress on insect pollinator habitats with pesticides, land development, lots of pavement, altered hydrologic patterns, and other actions. As a result, insect species have declined significantly. Loss of these insect species could have negative global impacts — wiping out crops, elevating food production costs, and compromising human nutrition.

But we have a new solution. Researchers at the US Department of Energy's (DOE) [Argonne National Laboratory](#), are investigating ways to use pollinator-friendly solar power as a way to reinvigorate pollinator habitats. By studying solar energy facilities that are combined with pollinator habitats on

site, researchers hope to encourage rehabilitating pollinator populations that play such a crucial role in national and global agricultural industries. Results indicate that solar farms can be good pollinator habitats.

With the goals of conserving habitat, maintaining ecosystem function, and supporting multiple ongoing human land uses in the landscape, researchers in Argonne's Environmental Science (EVS) division have found that the area around solar panels may provide an ideal location for the plants that attract pollinators.

Several recent initiatives have featured the creation and maintenance of [pollinator habitats at US utility-scale facilities](#), typically planting seed mixes of regional native plants such as milkweed and other wildflowers within the solar infrastructure footprint after construction. Sowing plant seed can be done among solar panels, or in areas adjacent to the solar facility, with the intent to attract and support native insect pollinators by providing food sources, refuge, and nesting habitat.

More traditional US utility-scale management practices have been intended to minimize or prohibit the growth of vegetation within the facility footprint. These are practices such as:

- placement of gravel
- establishment and maintenance of turf grass
- regular mowing
- herbicide application

Hopefully, these practices will be discarded in coming years, both among new solar farm installations, and by modification of practices at existing installations. Indeed, several states (New York, Minnesota, Maryland, Vermont, and Illinois) mandate that solar farms be pollinator-friendly. Illinois and other states and organizations also offer Solar Site Pollinator manuals and score cards. (Feel free to pass this article to any KY utility executive that you think needs to see it).

On the business side, Connexus Energy partnered with Bolton Bees to install apiaries on their solar farms. Travis and Chiara Bolton, owners of Bolton Bees in St. Paul, MN, have been harvesting honey from the sites for three years. "SolarHoney" is sold at grocery stores, and a portion is given to solar garden subscribers or donated to local community fundraising events.

Spreading knowledge about the desirability of a symbiosis of solar farms and pollinator habitats may widen appreciation among community members and local governments for a positive role in agricultural production as well as in electricity production of solar farms. It may also persuade solar developers to rethink the landscape design around their larger installations.

For more information, see: <https://fresh-energy.org/beeslovesolar/>

and: <https://www.power-grid.com/2020/06/02/kentucky-residents-and-businesses-help-build-pollinator-friendly-community-solar-array/#gref>

Upcoming Events

The 44th (Virtual) Annual Governor's Conference on Energy & the Environment, Oct. 13-14

The Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet is pleased to announce the conference will take place online this year. Even though the original in-person event was cancelled due to COVID-19, it is important to keep conversations going about economic development opportunities within sustainable agriculture, Kentucky's business outlook, brownfield redevelopment potential, renewable energy procurement, energy affordability, environmental justice, and regulatory and policy updates, to name a few. Businesses, citizens, non-profits, and academic institutions are encouraged to attend.

Featured speakers include:

- Laura Freeman of Laura's Lean Beef
- Jackie Roberts, Chief Sustainability Officer of AppHarvest
- Carson Harkrader, CEO of Carolina Solar Energy
- Michael Baute of Silicon Ranch's Regenerative Energy

Check for details at <https://eec.ky.gov/Pages/Governor's-Conference.aspx>



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