

## For Immediate Distribution

### Contacts:

Amanda Ormond, [Amanda@westerngrid.net](mailto:Amanda@westerngrid.net), (480) 227-8312

Rosalind Jackson, [Rosalind@votesolar.org](mailto:Rosalind@votesolar.org), (415) 817-5061

## New Report Contrasts Business-as-Usual and Clean Energy Futures for the Western Power Grid

### *Former CO Gov. Ritter Joins Western Advocates to Urge State Leadership on Clean Energy*

August 24, 2011 – A new report, [\*Western Grid 2050: Contrasting Futures, Contrasting Fortunes\*](#), examines two very different energy investment pathways facing the 11 western states: business-as-usual or a new clean energy trajectory. The report finds that with intentional policymaking and planning today, the West can successfully transition to a clean energy economy that will deliver job, environmental and public health benefits for decades to come.

The report was released by the Western Grid Group (WGG) with support from the Western Clean Energy Advocates (WCEA) – a broad alliance of more than 25 renewable energy industry, environmental, tribal, and public health organizations and regulatory experts. Former Colorado Governor Bill Ritter joined the advocacy groups in calling for western state leadership and regional collaboration to achieve the report's Clean Energy Vision.

"In my time as Governor, Colorado saw tremendous benefit from our commitment to clean energy," said former Colorado Governor Bill Ritter. "I call on Western state policymakers to similarly prioritize clean energy and to reach across state lines to help build a stronger energy future for the West. We can't afford to wait for Washington, nor should we. The West is the land of frontiers, of pioneers and innovation. Let's make good on that heritage. Let's break with business-as-usual and build a more prosperous, safe, and sustainable energy future."

Over \$200 billion will be invested in the western electricity system over the next two decades as aging infrastructure is replaced and new infrastructure is built to meet our country's growing energy needs. Policy and investment decisions made today will have lasting economic and environmental consequences. *Western Grid 2050* is intended to provide a detailed analysis of the business-as-usual and clean energy paths, so westerners can make an informed choice.

"It is time to rethink our grid," said report author Carl Linvill, Director of Integrated Energy Analysis & Planning at the Aspen Environmental Group. "Advances in information, communications and clean energy technologies have opened the opportunity to overcome the barriers of 20th century grid technology and transition to a 21st century clean energy economy in the West. Retooling the infrastructure and changing the way we use will require a serious commitment, but the transition is achievable through deliberate policy, planning and investment decisions."

Our diverse coalition of industry associations, conservation groups, and regional clean energy advocates have come together to ensure that decision-makers and the public understand the opportunities we have to create a more secure and sustainable energy future—and understand the costs and risks of continuing to rely on coal and gas," said Dave Olsen, Managing Director of Western Grid Group.

**Key report findings:** The report details the energy resource mixes and grid operations of contrasting cases in 2030 and 2050. Business As-Usual (BAU) cases assume our continued dependence on legacy resources, infrastructure and grid operation in order to meet Western electricity needs. Renewable technologies are only deployed to meet current mandates; efficiency measures are modest; and the remainder of our power needs is met with traditional resources: coal, nuclear, and large hydro. Clean Energy Vision (CEV) cases assume that efficiency, demand response, and distributed (or small-scale) renewable generation are pursued aggressively; that we transition away from coal; and that large-scale renewable power plants fill the gap. CEV cases also assume increased electrification of our transportation system as well as

operational changes and advanced technology grid upgrades to facilitate regional coordination and improve resource allocation. **With careful planning, the CEV will deliver a better return on the West's energy investment:**

- *CEV Creates More Local Jobs:* CEV represents significantly more direct investment in high job-creating infrastructure development and operation than BAU, which requires high expenditures on fuel supply.
- *CEV Increases Energy Reliability and Security.* CEV delivers the energy security and price benefits of reduced dependence on volatile fuel supplies, centralized power generation and imported fossil fuels (via electrification of our vehicles).
- *CEV Significantly Reduces the Direct Environmental Impact of our Power Supply:* CEV is much less polluting and emits significantly less carbon dioxide. CEV also reduces electricity-related water consumption by more than half by 2050, saving 289-343 billion of gallons of this severely limited resource.
- *CEV Is Achievable with Manageable Impact on Western Lands.* The highest large-scale renewable build-out case under CEV represents approximately ½ of 1% of the land in the West.
- *CEV Improves Public Health:* CEV cases can prevent hundreds of thousands of cases of premature death, heart attacks, asthma from particulate matter and neurological and development disorders from mercury exposure.
- *CEV is Likely a Cost Saver for Consumers:* By taking full advantage of energy saving opportunities, a CEV trajectory can be achieved at lower cost than BAU. Because BAU cases have higher fuel and carbon costs, CEV will only cost consumers more in the unlikely case that natural gas prices and carbon prices stay low for the next 20 years.

The *Western Grid 2050* report is the first in a suite of materials from WGG and the WCEA proposing sustained, orderly transition to clean energy across the western U.S. In September, the WGG and WCEA will release the second phase of this report, *Clean Energy Vision Policies*. The next phase will identify the many policies that are already in use and can be expanded as well as new ones available to states that can and will guide a transition to a prosperous clean energy future.

To view the *Western Grid 2050: Contrasting Futures, Contrasting Fortunes* report and supporting materials, visit:

<http://www.cleanenergyvision.org/>

#### **About the Western Grid Group:**

Since its founding in 2003, The Western Grid Group has worked to develop transmission and procurement policies that support large-scale utilization of renewables and efficiency.

#### **WCEA members include:**

American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies (CEERT), Clean Energy Project, Clean Line Energy Partners, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Geothermal Energy Association (GEA), Intertribal Council on Utility Policy (Intertribal COUP), Interwest Energy Alliance, Island Energy Coalition, Large-Scale Solar Association (LSA), National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Nevada Conservation League (NCL), Nevada Wilderness Project (NWP), NW Energy Coalition (NWEC), Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA), Renewable Northwest Project (RNP), Sierra Club, Sonoran Institute, Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP), The Wilderness Society, Utah Clean Energy, Vote Solar, Western Clean Energy Campaign, Western Environmental Law Center (WELC), Western Grid Group (WGG), Western Resource Advocates (WRA)

###