

# EPA plan is moving states forward on energy options

*The Lowell Sun*

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Thank you for The Sun's editorial that alerted readers to a small, thoughtful change in the final Clean Power Plan regarding treatment of renewable energy sources.

Since the EPA heeded comments, it pushed back the rules by two years (it takes time to clean coal plant operations, convert plants to natural gas, install pipelines, and build nuclear plants). The original timeframe was inadequate and states felt pressure. But climate change is serious, emissions are mounting, and the U.S. wants to lead. What to do?

Since the EPA also learned during the draft period that some states have been more successful in efforts to install cheap, renewable energy than originally anticipated, the EPA factored this success into the CPP. The Sun cited Cape Wind as evidence that renewables are too expensive to get off the ground, but that isn't the experience of many states. For example, in Texas, which is serious coal, oil and gas country, wind energy produced 1 percent of Texas' electricity in 2002, 8 percent in 2013, and 14 percent at the end of 2014. So, although the EPA delayed the CPP start date by two years, it creatively decided to use these years as an intro period. Renewables installed during the intro period (and energy efficiency programs for low income communities) could earn credits to offset against a state's other emissions.

It also was clever because the U.S. made an international commitment for 17 percent emissions cuts by 2020.

Delaying the CPP start date made it likely that we would not meet that goal. However, building on the renewables momentum could help us get there.

The editorial erred by suggesting that, because of the intro incentives for renewables, states aren't allowed to increase natural gas as a percentage of their mix. The CPP allows states to attain their emissions goals with any combination of energy sources that

the states want. The EPA expects use of natural gas will increase, then peak, and eventually decline, but it's entirely up to each state.

Let's praise the EPA for giving states extra time to install more low emissions energy systems, but let's also recognize that the EPA's regulations represent a failure of Congress to enact an effective, efficient, equitable, market-based carbon tax which is the best way to deal with carbon emissions.

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