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## OF NUCLEAR INTEREST: Proposed clean energy updates

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Posted Aug 9, 2017 at 6:00 AM

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These updates are consistent with the state's Global Warming Solutions Act, which requires declining carbon emissions from 1990 levels: 25 percent reduction by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.

MassDEP's proposed updates are also in response to a 2016 lawsuit (Kain v. MassDEP) that resulted in the court directing the agency to develop regulations that set enforceable limits to help meet the 2020 reduction target. Governor Baker signed an executive order in 2016 that requires, in part, that MassDEP shall publish these final regulations by August 2017.

One of the six updates that may be of particular interest to South Shore residents is the Clean Energy Standard. The CES essentially requires sellers of electricity to purchase increasing amounts of "clean" energy for use by their customers, and is designed to increase the percentage of electricity sold to consumers that is generated by clean energy sources.

Which generators qualify as a “clean energy source,” according to the CES? As written, eligibility is determined using an emissions-based threshold and is limited to generators built after 2010. This includes large hydroelectric generators, nuclear power plants, and certain fossil fuel plants.

While we commend the state’s efforts to promote energy efficiency and clean energy, we strongly believe that clean energy sources need to be defined, not just by emissions in Massachusetts, but the total impact caused by the technology. This is especially true for environmental impacts, including associated pollution with mining and operations, pipeline emissions, and ultimate transportation and management of waste products.

Nuclear waste in Massachusetts, for example, is currently stranded on the Cape Cod Bay shoreline with no repository or solution in sight. This exceptionally dangerous waste will remain a threat for hundreds of thousands of years, and dealing with it over time requires enormous investment in energy for transport, security, and problem solving. Not exactly the definition of “clean.”

There is some speculation that MassDEP could change the CES in the final version to include nuclear power facilities built prior to 2010 (aka, Entergy’s Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station, our state’s only commercial nuclear plant currently operating). This could potentially lead to additional subsidies for the already heavily subsidized industry and create more economic incentive for Pilgrim to continue operating passed its announced shutdown date in 2019.

While this is unlikely for Pilgrim, it is not outside the realm of possibility. In 2015, Entergy announced the closure of its FitzPatrick plant in New York citing financial reasons, the same year it announced Pilgrim’s closure for similar economic reasons. The state of New York subsequently developed new subsidies as part of its Clean Energy Standard, which led to Exelon purchasing the plant. Fitzpatrick has now returned to full power and will continue operating for the near future.

MassDEP is scheduled to announce final regulations this month. Let’s hope that Massachusetts stays the course, and older nuclear plants are not eligible under the CES. Such an action would divert credits and incentive away from truly clean energy advancement and technologies, and shackle our region to serious and unresolved problems for years to come.

*Karen Vale-Vasilev manages Jones River Watershed Association's (JRWA) Cape Cod Bay Watch program. JRWA has its offices on the banks of the river in Kingston, eight miles from Pilgrim.*