

July 29, 2021

The Honorable Jennifer M. Granholm,  
Secretary of the Department of Energy  
Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Martin Keller, Director  
National Renewable Energy Laboratories  
901 D Street NW #930  
Washington, DC 20024

**RE: DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND NATIONAL LABORATORIES DEVELOP ROADMAP TO 100% RENEWABLE AND JUST ENERGY FOR TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY**

Dear Secretary Granholm and Director Keller,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we, the undersigned 87 organizations urge the Department of Energy (DOE) to prioritize the Tennessee Valley Authority (“TVA”) as a national living laboratory to pioneer the country’s renewable and just energy transition urgently needed to combat the climate emergency. Specifically, we urge DOE, through the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) or other available authority, to develop the roadmap for TVA to provide 100% clean and renewable energy to the Tennessee Valley by 2030.

TVA has a proud history of serving the nation and people of the Tennessee Valley through ambitious missions around rural electrification, flood control, environmental stewardship, and job creation. TVA is well suited to repeat its earlier success as a renewable energy pioneer, and by relying on DOE’s remarkable ingenuity and scientific expertise, the utility could lead the country once again towards a just renewable energy transition.

Unfortunately, today TVA is 45% fossil-fueled and consistently ranks poorly on plans to retire coal, cease new gas plant construction, and build renewable energy within the next decade.<sup>1</sup> TVA’s current resource plan provides that TVA will still be generating *more than 34 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually in 2038*,<sup>2</sup> and just recently the utility decided to add 1,500 MW of new gas for \$1 billion.<sup>3</sup> TVA has proposed retiring 2 of its 4 remaining coal plants, yet despite the climate emergency continues exploring new gas development and further dependence on fossil fuels.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, TVA’s power company customers are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with TVA service, leading several to ask the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for permission to leave TVA’s service territory altogether.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Dirty Truth About Utility Climate Pledges, Sierra Club, (January 2021), <https://coal.sierraclub.org/the-problem/dirty-truth-greenwashing-utilities>.

<sup>2</sup> TVA 2019 Environmental Impact Statement, Final EIS at 5-27.

<sup>3</sup> See TVA Replacing Natural Gas Units, Supports Solar Growth (July 6, 2021), <https://www.tva.com/newsroom/press-releases/tva-replacing-natural-gas-units-supports-solar-growth>.

<sup>4</sup> See Kingston Fossil Plant Retirement (June 2021), <https://www.tva.com/environment/environmental-stewardship/environmental-reviews/nepa-detail/kingston-fossil-plant-retirement>. See also TVA Asks for Public Input on Review of Cumberland Fossil Plant Retirement Options (May 11, 2021), <https://www.tva.com/newsroom/press-releases/tva-asks-for-public-input-on-review-of-cumberland-fossil-plant-retirement-options>.

<sup>5</sup> *Athens Utilities Board v. TVA*, No. EL21-40-000 (FERC 2021).

In January, President Biden issued an Executive Order directing the country’s electricity sector to be carbon-free by 2035 and specifically calling for all agencies “to organize and deploy [their] *full capacity* . . . to combat the climate crisis.”<sup>6</sup> Secretary Granholm has similarly underscored that DOE “has the solutions to tackle our climate emergency.”<sup>7</sup> Among those solutions is DOE’s incredible national laboratories, including NREL, which DOE can harness<sup>8</sup> to tackle one of the biggest challenges facing our nation: how to transition TVA – the nation’s single largest public power provider – from its heavy fossil fuel portfolio, to 100% renewable energy on a timeline consistent with climate science.

TVA has no roadmap toward the Biden administration’s stated climate goals. We therefore ask **DOE, through NREL or other available authority, to develop a concrete plan for TVA’s renewable and just energy transition, maximizing distributed and decentralized energy resources and ensuring union jobs and strong labor standards for workers.** We are encouraged by NREL’s recent report outlining Los Angeles’ path to 100% renewable energy by mid-century<sup>9</sup> as well as the innovative Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative to advance distributed energy to transform Hawaii’s energy system to 100% clean energy by 2045.<sup>10</sup> NREL can apply that same technical expertise to develop a concrete clean energy plan that will justly transition TVA to 100% renewable energy by 2030, with an emphasis on building community-based and rooftop solar systems, energy efficiency, battery storage, and microgrids to enhance climate resilience. This plan would both serve TVA as well as all private and public utilities as a model for a public, democratic, and distributed renewable energy system that addresses the disproportionate burden Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other communities of color, low-wealth, and rural communities experience from the existing utility system nationwide.

Sincerely,

[Signatories begin on next page.]

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<sup>6</sup> See President Biden Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, Sections 201 and 205(b)(i) (“Biden Order”) (Jan. 27, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>.

<sup>7</sup> Secretary Jennifer Granholm, *Message to America* (Feb. 25, 2021), at <https://www.energy.gov/articles/secretary-granholms-message-america>

<sup>8</sup> See FAR 35.017-3.

<sup>9</sup> Cochran, Jaquelin, and Paul Denholm, eds. 2021. The Los Angeles 100% Renewable Energy Study. Golden, CO: National Renewable Energy Laboratory. NREL/TP-6A20-79444. <https://maps.nrel.gov/la100/>.

<sup>10</sup> *NREL and Hawaiian Electric Navigate Uncharted Waters of Energy Transformation (Part 1)*, National Renewable Energy Laboratories (Apr. 23, 2018), <https://www.nrel.gov/news/features/2018/nrel-and-hawaiian-electric-navigate-uncharted-waters-of-energy-transformation-part-1.html#video>.

## CONVENING PARTNERS

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