

## Action is Our Only Option for a Habitable Future

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By Thomas Beck, AIA, NCARB

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) just came out with a policy brief that addresses the question “How Can the United States Electrify Most Fossil Fuel Use By 2050?” Written by Steven Nadel in August 2023, the 17 page brief projects that it is possible for 90% of current energy use can be electrified by 2050.

[https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/the\\_united\\_states\\_can\\_electrify\\_most\\_fossil\\_fuel\\_use\\_encrypt.pdf](https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/the_united_states_can_electrify_most_fossil_fuel_use_encrypt.pdf)

In an email sent to Friends for a Livable Climate, Gordon MacAlpine points out that “ The world has temporarily passed the 1.5C (above pre-industrial levels) global temperature limit set by the UN, and it is predicted that we may reach the 1.5C limit for the long term as early as 2025. Scientific research also suggests the ocean circulation, so important for maintaining world climate, may shut down as early as 2025.”

Meanwhile, in reporting by Lisa Friedman in the New York Times, “Project 2025” is a plan by oxymoronicly named “conservatives” that “calls for shredding regulations to curb greenhouse gas pollution from cars, oil and gas well and power plants, dismantling almost every clean energy program in the federal government and boosting the production of fossil fuels – the burning of which is the chief cause of planetary warming.”

We have written in the past about the exorbitant subsidies the fossil fuel industry continues to receive from the US Government. In May 2023 the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Budget Committee, in his opening statement to the committee, quoted the International Energy Agency (IEA), saying “...fossil fuel handouts hit a global high of \$1 trillion in 2022 – the same year Big Oil pulled in a record \$4 trillion of income. In the United States, by some estimates taxpayers pay about \$20 billion dollars every year to the fossil fuel industry.” What the US taxpayer gets for that is approximately zero.

<https://www.budget.senate.gov/chairman/newsroom/press/sen-whitehouse-on-fossil-fuel-subsidies-we-are-subsidizing-the-danger-#:~:text=As%20we'll%20hear%20today,record%20%244%20trillion%20of%20income.>

“It is not about debts or deficits. It’s dirty work for an industry that controls one of the main political parties in this country. Oil and gas extraction represents only about 5 percent of GDP. Farming, manufacturing, food and beverage, insurance, finance, restaurants, retail, housing, healthcare – all represent a larger share of GDP. Clean energy now accounts for more employment than the fossil fuel industry. But for political influence, to protect those massive subsidies, nothing compares to fossil fuel.”

This corporate welfare should make every American citizen fighting mad about how our tax dollars are being used to finance the demise of our own futures on this planet.

Hand wringing is not an option. Every action, small and large, we can take to mitigate our hurtle toward an uninhabitable future is necessary. MacAlpine mentions several “active, committed organizations like the Colorado Coalition for a Livable Climate (CCLC) ( <https://colivableclimate.org/> ) or the Northern Colorado Partners for Clean Energy (NCP4CE) ( <https://colivableclimate.org/about-ncp4ce/>). Our local League of Women Voters actively promotes recycling ( [https://www.lwv-estespark.org/content.aspx?page\\_id=0&club\\_id=706933](https://www.lwv-estespark.org/content.aspx?page_id=0&club_id=706933) ) and this coming Saturday August 12<sup>th</sup> will operate Estes Recycles Day. Thanks to support from local Rotary clubs, Premier Members Credit Union, the Village Thrift Shop, the Town of Estes Park and Eco-cycle, we have the opportunity to recycle batteries and, most significantly, electronics at greatly reduced fees, like \$5 for computers and \$10 to \$20 for TVs. This is a great way to take significant steps that can make a difference.

MacAlpine is one of the dedicated volunteers on the Environmental Sustainability Task Force, whose final report from January 2022 is available on the Town's website, <https://estespark.colorado.gov/estf>. Another action we can take is to continue to hold our town accountable, to act on the more than 50 recommendations made by the task force. MacAlpine is also actively working toward bringing Platte River Power Authority (PRPA) representatives to give a general public presentation about their claims to be working toward "carbon-free or fossil-fuel-free" electricity by 2030, claims which MacAlpine says are "totally not true."

Here in our Together We Build column we share sustainability info and continue to believe our individual actions make a big difference when added together. See you Saturday morning at Estes Recycles Day.

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