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- [Foundations](#)
 - [We Energies](#)
 - [Wisconsin Public Service](#)



Generation reshaping plan includes solar project, coal plant closure

We are committed to balancing reliability and affordability with good environmental stewardship.

As part of that effort, we are making plans to reduce power generation costs, reduce carbon emissions, preserve fuel diversity and maintain reliability. Two key components include closing the coal-fueled Pleasant Prairie Power Plant and investing in utility-scale solar generation.

We will work with industry partners, environmental groups and the state of Wisconsin to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by approximately 80 percent below 2005 levels by 2050. The focus is to continue a balanced electric generation mix while taking the following actions:

- Retiring older, coal-fueled units.
- Building advanced technology natural gas units.
- Investing in cost-effective, zero-carbon, renewable generation.

These changes are driven mainly by sustained low natural gas prices; a dramatic reduction in renewable generation cost, particularly solar; and limited to flat growth in electricity demand. Electric market prices are expected to remain low for the foreseeable future, and the planned plant retirements and new investments will better balance supply with demand.

Retiring coal-fueled units

We began reducing CO₂ emissions from coal-fueled generation through the conversion of We Energies' Port Washington Power Plant (now Port Washington Generating Station) and Valley Power Plant to natural gas in 2005-08 and 2014-15, respectively. Combined, We Energies and WPS plan to retire more than 1,800 additional megawatts (MW) of coal-fueled generation by 2020, including:

- WPS' 200-MW Pulliam Power Plant in late 2018
- We Energies' 100-MW share of Edgewater 4 by end of September 2018
- We Energies' 350-MW Presque Isle Power Plant by mid-2019
- We Energies' 1,190-megawatt Pleasant Prairie Power Plant in the second quarter of 2018, pending approval by Midcontinent Independent System Operator.

Building natural gas units

UMERC is building 180 MW of reciprocating internal combustion engine (RICE) generation in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, expected to be in service by mid-2019. WPS is evaluating the addition of 50 MW of the modular, reliable and flexible RICE generation in Marinette in the years to follow.

Investing in zero-carbon generation

While we already achieve about 25 percent of energy from carbon-free generation, including ownership of the two largest wind generation sites in Wisconsin (Blue Sky Green Field and Glacier Hills Wind Park), we see the potential for more than 350 additional MW of solar generation in the state by 2020. Large-scale solar technology has greatly improved in cost and efficiency and would fit Wisconsin's summer electricity needs.

Ultimately, the reshaping of our generating fleet through retirement of coal-fueled units, addition of natural gas units and investment in solar generation will preserve fuel diversity while reducing both costs to customers and carbon emissions.

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