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## Three States Consider Leaving Carbon Trade System

Tuesday, 04/12/11 7:34am

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Amy Quinton



Photo by Public Service of New Hampshire

Merrimack Coal-Fired Power Plant, Bow, NH. New Hampshire is considering leaving the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which regulates greenhouse gas emissions.

(Host) The nation's first carbon trade system, which started in the Northeast may be in trouble. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or RGGI, is designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 10-percent by 2018.

But now, three of the 10 states in the initiative are considering withdrawing, in part because of the cost to electric ratepayers.

As part of a collaboration with Northeast public radio stations, Amy Quinton with New Hampshire Public Radio reports.

(Quinton) The goal of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative is to make polluters pay while raising millions of dollars for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

It requires power plants to buy one pollution credit at auction for every ton of greenhouse gases they release.

So far those auctions have netted more than \$860 million.

But now, some lawmakers in three states - New Hampshire, Maine, and New Jersey - want to get out of RGGI.

(Garrity) "We should have never joined in the first place."

(Quinton) That's New Hampshire Republican Representative Jim Garrity speaking on the house floor.

(Garrity) "RGGI should be repealed now because it rests on shaky economic science, namely that the government should collect some money from all of us, to redistribute that wealth to a few of us."

(Quinton) Garrity says not everyone gets RGGI money to pay for energy efficiency projects.

He and other Republicans have referred to RGGI as a hidden carbon tax that's passed on to electric ratepayers.

Legislation to repeal New Hampshire's participation in RGGI recently passed the house, but has yet to pass the Senate.

Dan Soslund, with the group Environment Northeast, says the move in New Hampshire is discouraging.

(Soslund) "I think the public deserves to hear their elected officials talk about policy direction based on facts and the facts are that RGGI has had almost no quantifiable bill impact."

(Quinton) But electric bills for residential customers in the Northeast have increased slightly because of RGGI.

In 2010, it cost an extra 28 to 68 cents a month according to RGGI Inc.

Ross Gittell is an economist with the University of New Hampshire.

Speaking from the House floor, he told legislators that electric bills won't decrease if the state withdraws from RGGI, because New Hampshire is part of a regional power grid.

(Gittell) "If we don't participate in RGGI, we will pay some of its costs, and we will not get the benefits in the form of carbon allowance revenue that we receive, which is quite significant."

(Quinton) New Hampshire is not only state attacking RGGI.



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In Maine, Republican Senator Tom Saviello is sponsoring a bill that would withdraw his state from RGGI.

*(Saviello) "We need to ask this question, number one do we want to put the extra cost on our electricity, and number two if these energy efficient projects are that good, which everybody says they are, well then a business should be willing to put their own money into it, why should we be subsidizing that."*

*(Quinton) If Maine and New Hampshire withdraw from RGGI, analysts say the program is still likely to continue.*

That may be because Maine and New Hampshire don't release a lot of greenhouse gases.

So the number of pollution credits they sell at auction is small.

But New Jersey's governor is also talking about withdrawing from RGGI.

That state makes up 12 percent of the carbon market.

Anthony Leiserowitz, with the Yale University Project on Climate Change, says if New Jersey steps out it could deal a death blow to RGGI.

*(Leiserowitz) "How it plays nationally however is that it just seems to accelerate this sense that the country as a whole and in particular Republicans and Conservatives in this country are really climbing out on a limb farther and farther away from climate science."*

*(Quinton) Leiserowitz says RGGI does more than reduce carbon emissions in the Northeast.*

He says if RGGI stays intact, it could be a model for the rest of the country.

For VPR News, I'm Amy Quinton.

*(Host) Northeast environmental reporting is made possible, in part, by a grant from United Technologies.*



## Tags

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### AARP Launches Campaign For Ratepayer Refund

Wednesday, 01/18/12 7:37am

A consumer organization representing older Vermonters is launching a media campaign that demands a refund for ratepayers if the state's largest utility is sold. AARP-Vermont says its goal is to win back money it says consumers are owed for bailing out the utility a decade ago.

### Northfield Reinstates Permit Fees

Wednesday, 01/18/12 7:04am

### Belleverance Sentenced To 3 1/2 Years For Embezzlement

Wednesday, 01/18/12 6:06am

### Wind Brings Scattered Power Outages

Wednesday, 01/18/12 6:06am

## NPR News

### Virtual Victuals: A Gamer Turns Video Game Food Into Real Food

Wednesday, 01/18/12 11:06am

Mushrooms and cherries first taught gamers what food can do in games. Now, one gamer has taken the food from the virtual world and put it on the dinner plate.

### Federal Authorities Charge 7 In Insider Trading Case

Wednesday, 01/18/12 10:11am

### In Snow-Weary Alaskan Towns, Sun And Smiles Emerge

Wednesday, 01/18/12 9:50am

### Internet Blackout Puts Washington Online Piracy Fight In Limelight

Wednesday, 01/18/12 9:33am

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