

**Meeting Notes**  
**Q4 2025 Natural Gas Advisory Committee**  
**October 28**  
**9:30am-12:00pm**  
**Online Only**



**Committee Attendees:**

Kevin Duell – NW Natural

Carlos Limon – Avista

Jackie Goss – Energy Trust

Michelle Wildie – Puget Sound Energy

Laney Ralph – NW Natural

Jodie Albert – Cascade Natural Gas

Joshua Dennis – Washington UTC

**NEEA Staff:** Alisyn Maggiora, Brandon Lindquist, Emily Moore, Mark Rehley, Chuck Karras, Noe Contreras, Neil Grigsby, Melissa Mejía, Jason Jones, Stephanie Quinn

**Resources**

- **Agenda packet on NEEA.org:** [Here](#)
- **Master slide deck on NEEA.org:** [Here](#)

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Housekeeping and Looking Ahead (Slides [8-22](#), Packet [1-2](#))**

- **Staffing Updates:** Deborah Sunada is on maternity leave, and Mel Mejía will oversee Dual-Fuel Residential HVAC program responsibilities. Chuck Karras has been hired as the new Product Manager for the natural gas portfolio, supporting residential and commercial water heating and HVAC initiatives.
- **Online Marketplace Pilot:** Discussed the Northwest Online Marketplace pilot (2026–2029), based on the Enervee platform, which aims to simplify energy-efficient product shopping and enable utility-branded landing pages.
- **Misc NEEA Reminders:** Members were reminded about Leadership Awards scheduled for December 8 and encouraged to provide feedback on the 2026 Operations Plan and submit Efficiency Exchange topics by October 31.
- **Product Council Updates:** Mark Rehley introduced Navien hybrid water heater combining electric heat pump technology with a tankless gas burner for improved efficiency and grid integration. 90%+ gas efficiency, competitive pricing, and first-hour ratings nearly double those of standard electric water heaters. Upcoming Product Council event scheduled for November 12 to showcase Navien product and discuss program implications. Noe Contreras presented a Product Council recap on distributed pumping strategies for hydronic systems, highlighting IE5 motors and efficiency-based pump sequencing demonstrated at the Museum of Flight case study.

**Discussion**

**Jackie Goss (Energy Trust):** Does the efficiency rating for the Navien hybrid water heater include tank losses like you would normally have for a gas water heater?

**Mark Rehley (NEEA):** Correct, it is more like the AFUE level.

## Committee Round Robin ([Slide 24](#))

**Jodie Albert (Cascade Natural Gas):** Filed draft biennial conservation plan; filing expected by November 15. Updated measures and rebates: most rebates increased or doubled for residential and commercial programs. Removed certain offerings due to cost-effectiveness concerns. Initiated EM&V for low-income program; completion targeted for next year. Launched second round of Home Energy Report pilot with larger sample size and email-only delivery. First round showed no statistically significant savings; evaluation suggested sample size was too small. Expect improved results with revised delivery method and expanded participant pool.

**Laney Ralph (Northwest Natural):** Draft biennial energy efficiency plan circulated to advisory group; filing scheduled for next month. Launching industrial energy efficiency program in WA, including transportation rate schedule customers. Dual-fuel pilots progressing: installations complete, data collection underway for current heating season. Exploring demand response integration for dual-fuel systems to optimize gas usage timing. Ground source heat pump pilot evaluated: positive performance but coordination challenges noted. Future pilots under discussion with publicly-owned utilities; focus on demand flexibility and cost-effectiveness.

**Carlos Limon (Avista):** Completed conservation plan updates and stakeholder advisory meetings. Introduced direct-install dual-fuel program to streamline implementation and reduce contractor complexity. Dual-fuel pilot ongoing: 12 sites (6 standard heat pumps, 6 cold-climate units). First heating season data under evaluation; preliminary feedback indicates commissioning and sizing issues. Second heating season will add weatherization measures to select sites to assess combined impact. Evaluation report expected after second season; lessons learned will inform future program design.

**Jackie Goss (Energy Trust):** Finalizing first multi-year plan (2026-2030); public comments received from all funding utilities. Dual-fuel pilot recruitment closed; installations prioritized for current heating season. Evaluation plan includes process evaluation (homeowner experiences, contractor interviews) and impact evaluation post-winter. Report expected next year; findings will guide future dual-fuel strategies and incentive structures.

**Michelle Wildie (Puget Sound Energy):** Personnel update: Patrick Weaver replaced Dan Anderson as head budget contact. Equity-focused small-med business programs expanded to support decarbonization and avoid pipeline expansion. Hybrid heating pilot extended for additional season; targeted electrification program report forthcoming. Clean Buildings Act compliance support underway for gas customers and Seattle Building Performance Standard (BPS) requirements. General rate case filing anticipated in early 2026; integrated system planning in progress.

**Kevin Duell (Northwest Natural):** Thermal energy network pilot progressing. Grant applications submitted to Commerce. Additional pilots for commercial and residential gas heat applications in incubation stage; contingent on rate case outcomes. Preparing design and readiness for rapid deployment pending funding approvals.

**Joshua Dennis (Washington UTC):** Announced Hybrid Distributional Equity workshop scheduled for October 29 (9:00 AM – 3:00 PM).

## Quarterly Report Highlights ([Slides 28-30](#) | [Packet 3-14](#))

NEEA staff briefed the Advisory Committee on recent activities and annual progress for the current Natural Gas Portfolio.

- **Portfolio:** Emily Moore provided a financial overview for the Natural Gas Portfolio. She noted that the 2026 draft budget is set at \$7.18 million, representing a 27% year-over-year increase to support portfolio growth and dual-fuel initiatives. For 2025, the forecast is trending approximately 5% below budget, primarily due to delayed hires, with no major variances reported. Emily highlighted that compensation and benefits are down 13% year-over-year, while emerging technology expenses are slightly above plan because of accelerated lab testing. She recommended aligning NGAC financial reporting with board-level quarterly updates, emphasizing that detailed data remains available upon request.
- **Scanning / Emerging Tech:** Chuck Karras opened with updates on scanning and emerging technologies, highlighting GTI Energy's modeling for commercial water heating across hotels, multifamily, and restaurants, as well as lab testing of gas absorption heat pumps and commercial boilers. He noted two Portland field demonstrations: one pairing a gas heat pump with traditional gas water heaters in a multifamily building, and another combining an electric air-to-water heat pump with gas water heaters in transitional housing. Both installations are targeted for completion by year-end. Noe Contreras discussed dual-fuel residential HVAC work, including a published white paper on technology and control strategies, a comprehensive heat pump analysis across eight climate zones, and a 13-site technology demonstration now fully metered for winter data collection. Lab testing of dual-fuel systems is scheduled for Q1 2026 following product delays.
- **Advanced Commercial Water Heat:** Melissa Mejía provided updates on the Advanced Commercial Water Heating program, emphasizing manufacturer engagement, Washington State Energy Code interpretation efforts, and two multifamily field demonstrations planned for Portland. Modeling results showed gas heat pump scenarios delivering the highest annual operating cost savings—up to 48.9%. Melissa also noted delays in market characterization work, now expected in Q2 2026, and shared insights from recent industry conferences underscoring strong alignment on gas heat pump adoption.
- **Efficiency RTUs:** Jason Jones reported on the Efficient Rooftop Units program, confirming new compliant products from CaptiveAire and Greenheck, expanded distributor partnerships, and development of six marketing assets by year-end. He highlighted national RTU modeling with over 3,300 runs analyzing insulation, leakage, and hybrid configurations, with regional modeling planned for 2026.
- **Codes, Standards, New Construction:** Mark Rehley addressed Codes and Standards activities, including DOE comment letters for 14 products, anticipated additional rulemakings, and updates on state code timelines. Washington's residential and commercial code updates are delayed to 2026, Oregon's residential code review is underway, and Idaho and Montana are considering adoption of IECC 2024. National model code development continues toward a 2027 publication.

### Discussion:

**Carlos Limon (Avista):** Is NEEA considering joining the residential committee for the Gas Heat Pump Collaborative?

**Neil Grigsby (NEEA):** Currently, NEEA participates in the commercial committee only. Noe listens to residential calls, but we haven't signed on as active members. We may reconsider if residential products near commercialization.

**Jackie Goss (Energy Trust):** What's the difference between scanning updates and program updates? Are they the same technologies?

**Melissa Mejía (NEEA):** Yes, same technologies, but scanning covers exploratory work; program updates focus on defined activities under the portfolio.

**Jackie Goss (Energy Trust):** Does “gas heat pump” in modeling refer to water heating or HVAC?

**Melissa Mejía (NEEA):** Water heating only.

**Michelle Wildie (Puget Sound Energy):** Surprised Montana and Idaho moved code changes forward, why now?

**Mark Rehley (NEEA):** Builders in Montana already exceed code requirements, prompting adoption of IECC 2024. Idaho adopted with amendments after extended debate.

## Feedback, Wrap-Up, & Adjourn

### A. Action Items and Feedback

#### 1) Action Items

- a. Neil Grigsby to follow-up with Noe Contreras on the North American Gas Heat Pump Collaborative on behalf of Carlos.