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### Md. needs a comprehensive energy plan

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In her op-ed "New energy will fuel new growth and pollution," (Sept. 13), Karen Hosler voiced concern about the lack of energy facility planning in Maryland. We are participating with a large number of national, statewide and local organizations advocating the development of a comprehensive energy plan for the state.

In the absence of such a plan we have a process in which new facilities are driven primarily by that which is most profitable. For example, federal policy allows a 12 percent to 14 percent profit for building new transmission lines. Of course, there's nothing inherently wrong with a market-driven process, provided other equally important factors are given adequate consideration. The trouble is that the current process for reviewing proposed energy facilities does not allow for balancing all alternatives to select that which is best in terms of reliability, cost to ratepayers, environmental considerations, public health and a host of other considerations.

We envision an open planning process in which our long-term energy needs are identified and then all options (wind, solar, energy conservation, etc.) for meeting these needs are examined by a diverse array of stakeholders. Presently, new energy facilities -- transmission lines, generating stations, etc. -- are reviewed on a first-come, first-utilized basis by the Maryland Public Service Commission. Unfortunately, the structure of the commission's review is more of an adversarial process as opposed to the free exchange of information and ideas typical of most comprehensive planning efforts. Many of our groups know this from their participation in the review of the recent major transmission line proposals as well as other energy facility applications before the commission. We are not criticizing the commission. In fact, prior to the deregulation of the late 1990s, the commission administered an integrated resource planning process, which provided many of the benefits we seek through comprehensive energy planning.

We have been engaging local and state officials throughout Maryland in discussions regarding the need to initiate a comprehensive energy planning process. We are pleased to report that a consensus is emerging among an expanding number of officials that the state should proceed with this process. Fortunately, various Maryland agencies are engaged in energy-related planning efforts which should provide much of the data required to formulate a comprehensive energy plan. The only thing we seem to be missing at this point is the leadership to pull the plan together. We urge Baltimore Sun readers to join with us in calling upon Governor Martin O'Malley to provide this leadership.

Kathy Phillips, Assateague Coastal Trust

Libby Nagel, Dorchester Citizens for Safe Energy

Rob Etgen, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Judith Stribling, Friends of the Nanticoke River

Richard Klein, Maryland Citizens for Safe Powerlines

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