



ELECTRIFY ASHLAND NOW!

## Statement on Avista's June 2022 Renewable Natural Gas Offer to Customers July 13, 2022

In June 2022, Ashland's "natural" gas (methane) provider Avista Utilities sent an offer<sup>1</sup> to its customers in Ashland and elsewhere: For a minimum of \$5 per month, customers can replace conventional gas with "renewable" gas from other sources.

*"... you now have a new option to add renewable natural gas and lower your carbon footprint," Avista wrote.*

[Electrify Ashland Now](#) has studied this proposal and found it to be misleading at best. In short, renewable "natural" gas (RNG) has no proven advantages over fossil "natural" gas. All available research supports the conclusion that efficiency and electrification are far superior to utilizing fossil "natural" gas or RNG – from climate, health, and financial perspectives.

We urge Ashland residents to continue on their path to all-electric homes. And we urge oil and gas companies to invest in a real clean energy future rather than taking a "greenwashing" approach that perpetuates easily avoided greenhouse gas emissions that are fueling climate chaos.

### Key Findings

#### **RNG is still methane, which has 86 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide over its first 20 years in the atmosphere.**

RNG (also known as "biomethane") is produced by decaying organic waste in landfills and concentrated animal feeding operations such as cattle feedlots and chicken farms. Biomethane and fossil methane are exactly the same chemical. Switching from one to the other will not reduce your carbon footprint.

#### **There is not enough RNG available to replace fossil "natural" gas.**

Avista currently has just one source of RNG<sup>2</sup>: the H.W. Hill Renewable Natural Gas facility in Roosevelt, Washington.<sup>3</sup> Most of the methane captured at this site is

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<sup>1</sup> <https://electrifyashlandnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/avista-RNG-offer-060722-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.myavista.com/energy-savings/green-options/renewable-natural-gas>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.klickitatpud.com/topicalMenu/about/powerResources/hwHillGasProject.aspx>

currently used to generate electricity. If all of it were sold to Avista, or if Avista were able to acquire methane from additional facilities, RNG would still only account for a small fraction of the company's annual methane sales.

The Natural Resources Defense Council recommends the following: "Biogas and synthetic gas should be used sparingly and strategically to meet on-site gas and electricity needs (to avoid transporting methane and building new pipelines), and to reduce emissions from activities that are most difficult to power with renewable electricity, such as industrial processes, aviation, long-distance transportation, and electricity generation to balance seasonal wind and solar resources."<sup>4</sup>

### **More costly to consumers.**

Including fees and charges, Avista currently sells "natural" gas for around \$1.26 per therm. Avista now offers you the opportunity to purchase RNG at a premium of \$5/month per 1.5 therms, or \$3.33 per therm. Avista is offering you a chance to spend nearly three times the price of its current fossil "natural" gas product for an alternative just as damaging to our climate and our health. This doesn't make financial sense for consumers, nor does it reduce our carbon footprint.

Moreover, for Ashland residents weighing gas vs. electric options, the Avista RNG deal is significantly more expensive than using electric heat pump water and space heating.

### **Bad for your health.**

RNG creates the same indoor air pollution which carries the same serious health risks as fossil-derived "natural" gas.

A recent Stanford University Study<sup>5</sup> found that gas stoves leak methane and that more than three-quarters of the leakage occurs when our stoves are turned off. Methane gas impacts our health by creating indoor pollution, outdoor pollution, explosion risks, pollution at the site of extraction and climate change.

While gas space and water heaters generate more emissions than stoves, Stanford researchers note that since stoves are located where people gather, they directly expose people to their combustion emissions, which can include formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and nitric oxides that can trigger asthma, coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing, occasionally resulting in hospitalization. Hood use and ventilation help reduce pollutants in kitchen air.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/pipe-dream-climate-solution-bio-synthetic-gas-ib.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://news.stanford.edu/2022/01/27/rethinking-cooking-gas/>

## **In Conclusion**

Rather than take critically needed steps to confront the urgent climate crisis, the oil and gas industry has adopted a strategy of attempting to sustain its "natural" gas infrastructure and business model by "greenwashing" a product — household "natural" gas — that does not have a place in a sustainable energy economy. Fossil "natural" gas and RNG are not good for the climate, your health, or your budget.

We are disappointed that Avista is following this strategy. The company has the opportunity to be a leader in the essential transition to clean renewable energy, and provide good clean energy jobs right here in Oregon. We would welcome Avista's active participation in authentic decarbonization strategies that swiftly put us on a path to sustainability.

*Electrify Ashland Now! is an Action Team of the Ashland Climate Collaborative.  
Learn more at [ElectrifyAshland.org](https://www.electrifyashland.org) and [AshlandClimate.org](https://www.ashlandclimate.org).*

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## **Other Reading:**

Power Past Fracked Gas, August 2021: [Methane Gas: Health, Safety, and Decarbonization](#)

Sightline, March 9, 2021: [The Four Fatal Flaws of Renewable Natural Gas](#)

Rocky Mountain Institute, May 2022: [Low-Carbon Fuels Have a Limited Role to Play in New York's Buildings](#)