



NC SUSTAINABLE
ENERGY ASSOCIATION

Clean Energy in the Southeast

North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association's 2026
Continuing Legal Education Program

January 29, 2026 | 8:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. | Brier Creek Country Club

Course Goal:

This course will explore energy matters currently at issue in North Carolina. This all-day continuing legal education program (CLE) will provide its attendees with legal and regulatory education on the ongoing transition to a cleaner energy mix and the related legal elements.

Attendees will receive the following credits:

North Carolina: **6.00 General CLE Hours**

Course Objectives:

- Provide attendees with an update on regulatory and legislative developments impacting clean energy in North Carolina
- Provide attendees current information that will be useful in the year ahead for their legal practices working on energy issues

Bios and photos of the speakers as well as the PowerPoint Slides will be made available through the NCSEA website with a special password we will provide to all attendees.



NC SUSTAINABLE
ENERGY ASSOCIATION

Thank You to our Sponsors!

Featured Sponsor



Premiere Sponsors



Lanyard Sponsor



Supporting Sponsors



8:00 – 8:45 A.M. **Networking & Conversation Over Breakfast**

8:45 – 8:55 A.M. **Welcome & Course Introduction**

- Goals of the course
- Agenda Overview

Josh Brooks, Chief of Policy Strategy and Innovation, North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association

Karen Kemerait, Partner, Fox Rothschild

9:00 – 10:00 A.M. **Local Permitting and Distributed Energy Resources: Barriers and Best Practices, sponsored by Parker Poe**

The deployment of distributed energy resources (DERs)—from rooftop solar to battery storage and microgrids—depends heavily on local permitting processes, which vary widely across North Carolina’s 100 counties and numerous municipalities. This panel will examine how these permitting pathways shape project timelines, customer access, and market growth. Experts will share insights on best practices from local jurisdictions, the legal basis for local permitting authority, and opportunities for reform that could streamline the process while maintaining safety and reliability. Participants will gain an understanding of how local governance affects the pace of the state’s energy, reliability, and affordability goals.

Katherine Ross, Partner, Parker Poe

Cordon Smart, Associate, Fox Rothschild

Hannah Klaus, Associate Attorney, SELC

Ted Spencer, Outreach Director, Center for Energy Education

10:00 – 10:15 A.M. **Break**

10:15 – 11:15 A.M. **View from the Bench: Advice on Practicing Before Utilities Commissions**

The View from the Bench panel consists of current or former commissioners providing their perspectives about the changing energy landscape in the Southeast and what emerging topics they are learning about in the energy sector that most interest them. Commissioners will provide advice to attorneys on how to be most effective when practicing before a commission.

Gray Styers, Partner, Fox Rothschild

Floyd McKissick, Commissioner, NC Utilities Commission

Kim Duffley, Former Commissioner, NARUC
Karen Kemerait, Partner, Fox Rothschild

11:20 – 12:20 P.M. **Performance-Based Ratemaking – Evaluating Progress, sponsored by CCEBA**

North Carolina’s adoption of multiyear, performance-based ratemaking (PBR) marked a major shift in utility regulation. This session will examine early evidence on the effectiveness of PBR and the associated Performance Incentive Mechanisms (PIMs) in driving innovation, cost control, and customer value. Panelists will analyze filings, performance metrics, and lessons learned from the first years of implementation under House Bill 951 and consider how the NCUC might refine or expand these mechanisms. Attorneys will come away with a clearer view of the evolving legal and regulatory frameworks that govern utility performance in North Carolina.

John Burns, General Counsel, CCEBA
Munashe Magarira, Senior Attorney, SELC
Peter Ledford, Attorney, Ward & Smith
Robert Josey, Counsel, Energy and Environmental Team, Nelson Mullins

12:20 – 1:30 P.M. **Lunch**

1:30 – 2:30 P.M. **Defining "Least Cost" in the Modern Energy Context**

The phrase “least cost” has long anchored North Carolina’s statutory framework for electric planning — but what does it mean today? With carbon reduction goals, federal funding opportunities, and growing reliability concerns, the calculus has grown more complex. This panel will explore how the North Carolina Utilities Commission (NCUC), state agencies, and stakeholders interpret “least cost” in light of priorities like resilience, emissions reduction, and grid modernization. The discussion will consider both the legal interpretations and the practical implications for integrated resource planning, rate cases, and project development.

Ben Snowden, Attorney, Fox Rothschild
Jennifer Harrod, Senior Attorney, Public Staff
Jonas Monast, Executive Director, Center for Applied Environmental Law and Policy
Christina Cress, Ward & Smith
Justin Somelofske, Senior Regulatory Counsel, NCSEA

2:35 – 3:35 P.M.

Managing Storm Recovery Costs and Investing in Resilience

As storms grow more frequent and severe, utilities are facing mounting storm recovery costs—and regulators must balance system restoration needs with ratepayer protection. This panel will analyze how North Carolina law currently governs cost recovery, securitization, and ratepayer protections, and highlight emerging regulatory innovations in other states that spread or mitigate risk. Attorneys and experts will discuss strategies for addressing and valuing resilience and ensuring transparency in recovery filings and aligning cost-recovery mechanisms with operating realities.

Zeke Creech, Staff Attorney, Public Staff

Ethan Blumenthal, Regulatory and Legal Counsel, NCSEA

Sherri White-Williamson, Attorney, EJCAN

Don Hornstein, Professor, Attorney, UNC Law

3:35 – 3:50 P.M.

Break

3:50 – 4:50 P.M.

Planning for Load Growth in NC and Across the Region, sponsored by Blanco Tackabery

The Southeast is entering a period of rapid transformation driven by accelerating load growth, new wind energy development—both onshore and offshore and evolving regional planning needs. This panel will examine how utilities, regulators, and developers are navigating these converging forces amid increasing demands for reliability, affordability, and decarbonization. In-house counsel and industry experts will discuss the contracting, permitting, and transmission challenges shaping large-scale renewable integration, as well as the legal and policy frameworks that guide cross-state coordination and infrastructure investment. Attendees will gain perspective on how more deliberate regional energy planning can help the Southeast manage rising demand, enable new renewable resources, and ensure a resilient electric system for the decades ahead.

Nick Guidi, Attorney, SELC

Ben Smith, Counsel, Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton

Taylor Speer, Attorney, Fox Rothschild

Dana Magliola, Sr. Director of Infrastructure Competitiveness, NC Chamber Foundation

Daniel Vandergriff, Renewable Energy Attorney, Blanco Tackabery

Rachel Wilson, Southeast Energy Market Lead, Attorney, Google



4:50 – 5:00 P.M.

Wrap Up and Conclusion

Hannah Budds, Policy Analyst, North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association