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**Contact:**

- Elizabeth Crowe, KEF, 859-986-0868
- Steve Wilkins, KFTC, 859-986-9506
- Wallace McMullen, Sierra Club, 502-228-001

## **Kentuckians to DAQ: Pollution from proposed coal-burning plant would harm public health**

*Clean energy a better, safer alternative to EKPC's Smith plant*

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WINCHESTER, Ky. – The huge health risks and high costs of treating health problems related to pollution that would be released from the smokestacks of East Kentucky Power Cooperative's proposed coal-burning power plant in Clark County make little sense in light of far cleaner energy alternatives, a broad cross-section of Kentuckians told state regulators Thursday night.

“The medical facts are clear: air pollution from power plants causes illness and death,” said Dr. John A. Patterson, a physician practicing in Estill County and a member of Clark Energy. “For the good of the health of Kentuckians, I urge the Kentucky Division of Air Quality to deny the Smith plant's pollution permit, and to ask EKPC to pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy programs instead.”

He and other health experts, along with rural electric co-op customers, business owners, coalfield residents, students and other Kentuckians whose air and water would be harmed by pollution from the plant, travelled to Winchester to testify at a hearing before KDAQ, which is considering final approval of an air pollution permit for the 278-megawatt Smith plant.

A crowd of more than 200 filled the Clark County Cooperative Extension office. The hearing lasted until 9:30 p.m., with a vast majority of the 41 who testified speaking out against the plant and in favor of cleaner energy sources.

Randy Wilson, a Clay County resident and customer of EKPC member co-op Jackson Energy, said risking the long-term health of Kentuckians is irresponsible in light of cleaner energy alternatives. He pointed to a coalition of 20 electric cooperatives in South Carolina similar to EKPC as a potent example of what can be achieved with forward-looking energy policies.

Through aggressive energy efficiency and weatherization programs, he said, the South Carolina program will cut energy costs by nearly a quarter million dollars and cost almost no money, and in the process create thousands of jobs in the building sector.

“Why are they able to plan to do this? They are not owned by coal interests. It only took moral and political will,” Wilson said. “EKPC could do the same thing. Rather than build the Smith plant and pollute our air with soot, smog, mercury and other contaminants, EKPC could offset demand with energy efficiency, weatherization, and clean energy sources. If it really invested in helping people tighten up leaky homes and generating clean power from the numerous dams we already have in this state, EKPC wouldn’t have to ask for a permit to pollute our air.”

Billy Edwards, a business owner and customer of EKPC member-cooperative Clark Energy said he was testifying at the hearing for several reasons.

“I live in Clark County and of course I’m concerned about the harm that pollution from Smith plant will do the air my family and I breathe and the water we drink,” he said. “But this is also huge financial burden EKPC is asking me and other members to carry. The price tag for this plant is nearing a billion dollars and keeps going up. EKPC can’t afford that, and neither can its customers.”

University of Kentucky senior Lydia Courtright said it’s important for younger Kentuckians to voice their strong support for clean energy over coal.

“It’s our generation who will end up paying for EKPC’s mistakes for decades – with long-term health consequences like increased asthma and hospital bills, with higher electricity rates, and with lost job opportunities,” she said. “Building a coal-burning power plant is an outdated idea and makes so little sense in the face of far cleaner and affordable energy sources.”

According to estimates from the draft air pollution permit issued by DAQ in early January, the Smith plant, which would burn coal conventionally, would emit thousands of tons of harmful pollutants if built. Emissions would include:

- 365 tons of soot, which can cause severe respiratory problems
- Nearly 2,000 tons of sulfur dioxide, the main cause of acid rain
- Nearly 2,000 tons of nitrogen oxides, a key chemical in the formation of ozone pollution
- 53 tons of volatile organic chemicals
- More than 2,500 tons of carbon monoxide
- More than 50 pounds of mercury, a potent neurotoxin

“For years I’ve lived with asthma, and I know what it’s like to suffer when air is polluted,” said Steve Wilkins a customer of EKPC member co-op Bluegrass Energy who lives in Paint Lick, Ky. “EKPC is putting me and my family and neighbors at risk by pursuing a coal-burning power plant design that will not only make the air we breathe dirtier, but also put a severe strain on our wallets. Why would they want to do that when there is a better way?”

The deadline for the public to submit comments to DAQ on the proposed plant is Feb. 12.

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[www.kftc.org/stop-smith](http://www.kftc.org/stop-smith) • [www.kyenvironmentalfoundation.org/cleanair.html](http://www.kyenvironmentalfoundation.org/cleanair.html) •  
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