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Analysis: air pollution from EKPC coal plant would violate new EPA health standards
Sulfur emissions allowed by permit would harm public health, increase health-care costs

Air pollution resulting from East Kentucky Power Cooperative's proposed coal-burning power plant in Clark County would violate new federal health-protection standards for sulfur dioxide pollution enacted early this month, according to modeling conducted on EKPC's emissions data.

EKPC's proposed Smith plant would be permitted to emit almost 2000 tons of sulfur dioxide every year, according to its air permit. Modeled pollution violations indicate that pollution from the plant's smokestacks would cause sulfur measurements in many parts of eastern Kentucky to increase above levels that are known to cause asthma attacks and other health problems. Higher sulfur pollution levels in the air would lead to increased hospitalizations and health-care costs.

"We see increasing rates of asthma not only in urban areas but throughout the region," said Colleen Ambrose, a nurse practitioner and customer of EKPC member Blue Grass Energy Cooperative. "Anytime we can prevent the causes of respiratory disease, we should take that opportunity. We should be investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources that meet our needs but don't pollute our skies and hurt our health."

Previous federal standards for sulfur pollution were based on medical research from the late 1960s that studied sulfur's acute and long-term effects on human health. EPA's new National Ambient Air Quality Standards for sulfur dioxide, which average emissions on a one-hour scale rather than just daily, reflect more recent scientific findings and current understanding of how sulfur can damage the lungs and cause other health problems, even with short-term exposure.

"We know that the old sulfur pollution standards under which the Smith plant was approved are inadequate and don't protect our health," said Megan Naseman, a member of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth who suffers from asthma. "The state of Kentucky and the Corps of Engineers have approved permits for the plant, which will leave more people with asthma and in the hospital. That makes no sense since there are far better and cleaner ways of meeting electricity demands than building a polluting coal plant."

In their comments on the Corps of Engineers permit, the Kentucky Environmental Foundation, Sierra Club and Kentuckians For The Commonwealth asked the agency to reject the permit for the Smith plant based on the new data showing how emissions would lead to air quality violations.

In addition to numerous pollution-related problems with the Smith plant – the EPA has objected to the permits for the project based on a number of deficiencies – the cooperative also continues to be plagued by grave financial concerns.

The price tag for the plant has nearly doubled in the past five years and now sits at more than \$900 million, and an audit of EKPC ordered by the Kentucky Public Service Commission and released in April was highly critical of EKPC's plans for the Smith plant. The scathing report said building the plant and adding nearly a billion dollars in debt are the riskiest actions that the utility could undertake.

“Regulatory agencies keep marching forward with permitting as if they had blinders on, oblivious to the overwhelming financial hole EKPC is facing,” said Elizabeth Crowe, Executive Director of the Kentucky Environmental Foundation. “Problems as deep as EKPC's affect every part of a company's operations, and the only viable and logical action for any agency involved in reviewing the Smith plant to take is to put a stop to EKPC's financial recklessness – before it wrecks both our air and our wallets.”

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*A copy of the groups' comments to the Army Corps of Engineers is available online at:
www.*

www.kftc.org/stop-smith • www.kyenvironmentalfoundation.org/cleanair.html
www.sierraclub.org/coal/ky/