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EPA air clean up proposal for Wyoming “second-rate”

State, feds, utilities urged to update aging Wyoming coal plants with best, modern pollution-cutting technology – not bare minimums

SHERIDAN – Wyoming residents and sportsmen lamented today that the EPA would let owners of aging coal-fired power plants in the state avoid updating their pollution controls with the most effective technology that’s now the standard for over 200 coal plants around the country.

While EPA’s proposed Regional Haze Plan for Wyoming required some improvements to the plan submitted by Wyoming’s Department of Environmental Quality, it fell short of fulfilling Clean Air Act requirements mandating the protection and restoration of air quality in the state. EPA’s plan will exempt some 1960s- and 1970s-era coal-burning power plants from modernizing with selective catalytic reduction pollution controls- controls similar to catalytic converters on a car that simply keep avoidable pollution out of the air. These controls can provide 90 percent or better reductions in ozone- and fine particulate-producing nitrogen oxide emissions

“Wyoming is a national leader in coal production, but we shouldn’t be a leader in coal pollution,” said Shannon Anderson with the Powder River Basin Resource Council. “PacifiCorp can easily afford not leave Wyoming second-rate and substandard compared to what can be done nowadays to safeguard health and the environment.”

Because of their old age and air pollution impact on human health and on haze at nearby national parks -- including Yellowstone -- PacifiCorp’s Jim Bridger plant (near Rock Springs), Naughton plant (near Kemmerer), Wyodak plant (near Gillette), and Dave Johnston plant (near Glenrock) are overdue for pollution control upgrades under provisions to the Clean Air Act adopted with broad support over three decades ago. PacifiCorp had been planning to continue running the 35- and 40-year-old plants for decades to come with bare minimum pollution-control retrofits that just don’t pass muster for genuine air quality protection.

Combined, coal plants subject to Wyoming’s plan emit over 40,000 tons of nitrogen oxide pollution each year. With 90% reductions, selective catalytic reduction technology could take upwards of 36,000 tons of that pollution out of the air, which would reduce haze in the air and improve public health in communities across the state. The Clean Air Task Force estimates that coal plant air pollution in the state results in over \$850 million in preventable health care costs.

In addition to protecting public health, reducing air pollution helps build strong local economies and supports Wyoming's important tourism industry.

"As someone who has spent a lot of time in the wilderness areas and National Parks of Wyoming, I'm very concerned about the haze," said Dan Smitherman, a former outfitter in Wyoming. "Visitors notice when the air is dirty, and that can have direct impact on tourism, the second largest business in the state. We should be cleaning up all sources of haze- and ozone-causing pollutants, including outdated coal-burning power plants."

According to Wyoming's Office of Tourism, the travel and tourism industry in Wyoming creates 30,000 jobs and generates \$730 million in employment earnings and \$2.8 billion in travel expenditures annually. Over 3.5 million people visit Yellowstone National Park each year.

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